UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PROFESSIONAL IMMIGRANT WOMEN: EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF ACCULTURATION

BY

ARLENE J. DUNN ©

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

ADULT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ADULT, CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1992

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ISBN 0-315-77203-4

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DEGREE: Master of Education

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Arlene Dunn

Arlene Dunn
45 Parkwood Drive
St. Albert, Alberta
T8N 5G6

Date: Oct. 7, 1992

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Collett

(Supervisor) D. Collett

Tracey Derwing

T. Derwing

Linda LaRocque

L. LaRocque

Date: Oct 6/92

DEDICATION

To my parents, Jeannette and Alex Sereda, both deceased and sadly missed, who taught me to believe in myself and instilled in me a strength of will that has carried me through many of my life's challenges.

To my husband, Jerry, and my sons, Darren and Jeff, who gave me the understanding, encouragement and support I needed to complete this degree.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to provide some insight into the experiences of acculturation of professional immigrant women and how these experiences were perceived to affect the process of acculturation.

The study was based, in part, on Freire's (1973) notion of praxis and conducting "research as praxis" (Lather, 1986). Research as praxis (Lather, 1986) was realized through the formation of a "cooperative inquiry group "(Reason, 1988), which shared the research responsibilities. Twelve women contributed rich, descriptive data to the study through the reflections and conscientization of their experiences of acculturation.

The data were categorized according to a) demographics (country of origin, length of time in Canada, profession in home country), b) reason and preparation for leaving home country, c) experiences upon arrival in Canada (first job, courses, efforts and obstacles in pursuing former profession), d) impressions of degree of acculturation in the Canadian culture (perception of happiness, feelings of wanting to return home, feelings of success), and e) advice to others who plan to come to Canada. Three main themes emerged from these categories through clustering and the use of data matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The factors which seemed to affect all facets of acculturation and the women's ability to achieve success in their professional pursuits were language competence, relevant and meaningful employment and attitude.

The women who felt most acculturated had a number of similarities. They felt good about their ability to communicate in the English language regardless of the level of correctness. They held fulfilling, meaningful jobs either in their profession or in a related area and were being paid relatively well in comparison to unskilled jobs. They all were very enthusiastic and

positive about their lives, had high self-esteem and felt confident that they could do what ever they wanted to in this country. There were some exceptions to these positive findings; however, most often, these women had specific and often unique reasons for their unhappiness and/or inability to feel good about being in Canada. Most of them felt, that with a good job, their feelings would likely change.

Some important outcomes of this study were: a) recommendations for changes within organizations and systems to ease the process of acculturation, b) the realization by the women of their own successes and failures, c) the identification of obstacles and barriers to success and d) recommendations to assist in the return of professional immigrants to their professions.

Doing "research by praxis" through cooperative inquiry was both rewarding and challenging. Working directly with the women whose very lives provided the fabric of the study, gave me new insight into the challenges faced by professional immigrant women in their efforts to make their lives fulfilling and meaningful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all who have assisted me in any way in the completion of my thesis. A special thank you to:

Dr. David Collett, for your insight, understanding and encouragement throughout all phases of this study.

Dr. Tracy Derwing, for your constructive comments, thorough editing, recommendations and knowledge of the topic.

Dr. Linda LaRocque, for your contribution in the final stages.

The women of the research group, for without your willingness to share your experiences so candidly, this study would not have been so meaningful and rich. Thank you for your commitment, comments and friendship.

The women who provided additional data to the study. Your contributions reinforced the beliefs and feelings of the women in the research group as well as contributed to the formulation of the recommendations.

My fellow students and friends who provided encouragement, listened to and shared my concerns.

The faculty and staff of the Department of Adult, Career and Technology Education for your encouraging comments and administrative assistance.

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CHAPTER I - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Factors Affecting the Process of Acculturation

Culture shock and the process of acculturation can affect people in many different ways. The way in which one copes with the problems inherent in adjusting to a new culture can be attributed to many factors. Some of the major factors are a) the reason for seeking relocation in another country, b) the attitude with which one comes to the new country, c) the availability of fulfilling and gainful employment, d) the ability to provide basic needs for the family, e) extent of involvement in activities within the larger community, f) ability to communicate with public agencies such as schools and health facilities, e) degree of understanding of the government and the law and f) ability to acquire competence in a new language. These are but a few of the multitude of challenges facing the majority of the immigrant population in Canada today.

Women often find the basic challenges of adapting to a new country compounded by the demands of their multiple roles and their culture. Their needs are frequently postponed in the interest of those of their family. It is the tradition, in many cultures, that men provide for their families and therefore feel a more pressing need to learn the language and get a job. Also, until recently, emphasis was placed on language and training programs for men to facilitate their search for employment. Women, on the other hand, remained at home, unable to take advantage of opportunities that contribute to the acculturation process, such as language classes. Family financial pressures can force them into meaningless, low-paying jobs before they have reached a level of language competence that could lead to more fulfilling employment. Frustration, humiliation, anger and a feeling of helplessness are but a few of the emotions felt by women who are forced to eke out an existence in jobs that use none of the skills and experience for which they were trained in their countries of origin. There is also often very little second language interaction in jobs of this nature and therefore, even the hope of improving what little second language they have is lost. Attending language classes after work becomes very difficult for most immigrant women due to demands of the family and home, and a lack of money, time and energy. For women in these circumstances, the process of acculturation is long and painful.

Efforts to Meet the Language Learning Needs

The challenge of acculturation is a reality for a growing number of people in Canada, with Alberta immigration numbers increasing steadily over the past five years to a total nearing 100 000 (Alberta Career Development and Employment, 1991). These numbers are almost equally divided between males and females with the largest proportion between 25 and 44 years of age (p. 25). Edmonton receives about 42% of Alberta's newcomers. Based on these numbers, it has been recommended that language and job-training programs be a top priority for our governments by many immigrant advocacy groups, not to mention immigrants themselves and their organizations (Immigrant Women's Conference, 1981; Husaini and Sudat, 1984; McGowan, 1982; Wismer, 1988).

Included in the federal government's 1991-1995 Immigration Plan is a recognition that settlement services for newcomers need strengthening and that "the basic ability to communicate...is often the essential first step towards successful integration" (Immigration Policy and Program Development Document, October, 1991, p. 1). The new policy includes two language training programs: Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and Labour Market Language Training (LMLT) (p. 2), currently being implemented by Employment and Immigration Canada. An additional $200 million will be allocated to language training programs over the five year period of the plan. Although this policy is a significant improvement over previous policies, with an undefined commitment to make special efforts to help women, only 20% of this funding will be designated to "provide specialized or advanced language training...needed by immigrants to acquire job skills or to make use of existing skills which are in demand in the local labour market" (p. 4). The eligibility requirements for this level are only one step beyond a basic level of language competency (for which the other 80% of the funding has been allocated) so the likelihood that even this second level of language training will lead to employment in the professions or a related field is unlikely. In a response to LINC, Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL) (1992) notes, "It is the experience of institutions in Alberta that...the level of linguistic proficiency specified by level 4 (the exit level of the LINC program) is too limited for employment preparation courses for most meaningful jobs" (p. 5).

Problems Facing the Majority of Immigrant Women

That immigrant women have a more pressing need for language training than men is merely a magnification of the situation and the problems of women in general. Statistics support that, in socio-economic terms, women are "disadvantaged" (Wismer, 1988). Immigrant women, then, are said to face a "double disadvantage" and if they are of a visible minority group, the disadvantage becomes even more complex. Wismer (1988) states, "Women are already disadvantaged within the formal economy. Those who are poor, have low education levels, are disabled, are immigrants, are native people, or live in geographically isolated areas carry a double disadvantage " (Wismer, 1988, p. 17).

Contributing to the economic well-being of the family and meeting the expectations of the home often leaves little time, energy or money to seek or attend courses for self-improvement. The employment opportunities of the majority of working women afford them the status of being among the working poor. One can hardly expect that "double disadvantaged" women would fare much better. Adaptation to a new culture can be made even more difficult with the added burdens of low income and decreased status.

The problems that immigrant women encounter in their attempt to establish themselves and their families in this country have been identified and studied in depth by numerous government departments (federal and provincial), settlement agencies and immigrant women themselves (B.C. Task Force on Immigrant Women, 1982; Canada Multiculturalism Directorate, Immigrant Women's Conference, 1981; Husaini & Sudat, 1984, and so on). Problems, as well as recommendations for possible solutions have been outlined in these studies and although some efforts at implementation have been acknowledged (Seward & McDade, 1988; Wismer, 1988), the studies more frequently emphasize the shortcomings of current efforts or a complete lack of appropriate programs (Husaini & Sudat, 1984; Seward & McDade, 1988; Wismer, 1988).

The problems cited in the above studies vary in degree, but all impact on the ability to become part of the new culture. Lack of language training, employment training and/or skills upgrading, immigration policy classifications, lack of recognition of credentials, unavailability and inaccessibility to child care, and the high percentage of low-skill and low-wage jobs held by immigrant women are some of the problems that have been identified as major obstacles in the integration process (Husaini & Sudat, 1984; Wismer, 1988). The studies report that the ability to speak one of the official languages is the bottom line in gaining access to decent jobs and/or further training (Wismer, 1988) thereby expediating the acculturation process. Problems in accessing language training range from ineligibility to qualify for programs due to immigrant status to inability to take advantage of existing programs because of a lack of money, time or energy. The problem of ineligibility due to immigrant status is addressed by the LINC program; however, immigrants who have become Canadian citizens are not eligible for language training under the LINC policy guidelines

Accessing language training programs often requires personal sacrifice and commitment on the part of immigrant women. Many have, however, tenaciously pursued their studies through evening classes and programs run in the workplace to help them qualify for further training programs that they hope will provide them with better employment opportunities, better incomes and more rewarding lives in this country. Those who have waited to access language training programs, for whatever reason, may find themselves ineligible for full-time, federally funded language training.

The Professional Immigrant Woman

There is a specific group of immigrants for whom the experiences of low-skill, low-wage jobs is especially distressing and for whom the process of adaptation is particularly difficult. This group includes immigrants who have professional training and work experience from their home countries and who have been unable to acquire the level of language proficiency, professional qualifications or Canadian work experience necessary to pursue work in their area of expertise.

Many immigrants who have professional training from their own countries are often drastically underemployed and very often do not return to their profession or even work in a related job. Such evidence was found in a survey conducted by Alberta Career Development and Employment, Immigration and Settlement Services in February, 1986. This study is not gender specific, but the experiences reported are undoubtedly equally degrading for men and women. The study provides some insight into the additional problems faced by professional immigrants in trying to establish themselves in this country. Seventy university educated immigrants, representing 15 different countries, participated in this study. The questionnaire and interview findings indicated that, although initial underemployment or even unemployment was accepted as a temporary situation by the interviewees, based on a lack of English and influential connections, educated immigrants found this new experience of downward mobility humiliating and painful. The study reported that this humiliation often grew into anger and depression during the frustrating process of trying to get credentials assessed and accepted. The results of the study showed that even though more than one-half of the respondents intended to continue in their previous careers, in fact, only 13% of the respondents obtained jobs at the same level as in their country of origin; another 7% were attending university to meet Canadian professional standards. The remaining 80% were either unemployed, underemployed or in the initial stages of settlement (less that one year in Canada). Although the study points out that educated immigrants expect their employment status to improve as their residency in Alberta increases, it also states that many of these people face several hard choices and due to family financial needs and disillusionment, they resign themselves permanently to lower-status jobs.

A study conducted by Housaini and Sudat (1984) focused on "The Needs of Immigrant Women in Edmonton," and concluded that immigrant women, in general, were overlooked by government in the areas of educational funding for English and job training and by employers in terms of suitable well-paid jobs. This study made several recommendations for changes in policy that would positively affect the lives of immigrant women in Edmonton. One such recommendation was that the skills and experiences of professional women be recognized and that training programs be implemented to target this group with the hopes of improving their employability and employment status. It is only through such changes that the process of adaptation will become less painful for the professional immigrant woman. While this study and recommendation was made eight years ago with many other similar recommendations having been made since that time, it was only recently that some action was taken. In response to an organization of immigrant professionals asking for recognition and assessment of credentials, the provincial government announced the formation of a bureau to which professional immigrants could apply for such a service (The Edmonton Journal, June 10, 1992). This process will be carried out in cooperation with the professional associations and will hopefully provide these people an avenue to return to their careers and take their rightful place among the professionals in this country.

Problem Statement

This study focused on the experiences and perceptions of professional immigrant women with regard to the acculturation process and the effect these experiences have had on the process. These findings should be useful in the planning and implementation of programs that can assist professional immigrant women in:

a) gaining acknowledgement for their credentials,

b) understanding and meeting the requirements necessary for them to work in a former or related profession,

c) bridging the gaps between what they have and what they need and,

d) accepting the need to work in other jobs until sufficient Canadian experience and qualifications are acquired.

The following questions guided the focus of the study:

1. What was the accessibility to and attendance in language training programs?
2 What was the perception of language competence and what effect did language competence have on integration?
3. What type of employment was accessed on arrival and what is the current occupation?
4. What effect did these employment experiences have on integration?
5. What changes of status were experienced and how did these changes affect feelings of self-worth?
6. What was the perceived adjustment of self in relation to others

within family and the larger ethnic group?

7. What personal aspirations and long-term goals have been established?
8. What efforts have been made to become part of the Canadian culture?
9. What was the perceived level of acceptance into the Canadian culture?
10. What was the accessibility to and pursuit of other education/training,
11. How has integration into the Canadian culture affected cultural and religious values and practices?

Purpose for the Study

Culture shock and the ensuing stages of adjustment are said to act as a "catalyst" to the acquisition of intercultural knowledge, leading ultimately to a high degree of self-awareness and personal growth (Harris & Moran, 1981). The progression through the stages is; however, an individual process and it cannot be assumed that everyone will progress at the same rate or will even complete the process. Many variables affect the process, varying from the reason for the migration in the first place and the attitude of the migrant, to the experiences encountered upon arrival in the new country.

The acculturation models of Adler and Wright (Harris & Moran, 1981) recognize the human needs for personal and social acceptance, belonging, recognition and individuality. According to these models, progress can be gradual through each of the stages of the developmental process of acculturation, eventually leading to the ultimate level of high self and cultural awareness. Alternatively, one can become "stuck" in one phase, depending on circumstances, experiences and the attitude of the individual. It is argued by theorists that learning and adaptation can be affected by the emotions that have been identified as characteristic of each of the stages (Harris & Moran, 1981; Kim, 1988; Richard-Amato, 1988). The above models will be elaborated on in Chapter II.

The large numbers of professional immigrants in the province of Alberta and the increasing levels of frustration and lack of recognition of professional credentials (The Edmonton Journal, Oct. 1990, Nov. 1991, Feb. 1992) should be of concern to educators and immigration officials alike. These issues in themselves could have a negative impact on the efforts of the immigrant population in accepting the greater challenge of becoming fulfilled, contributing members of Canadian society. As was noted earlier in the study of professional immigrants done by Alberta and Career Development (1986, p. 3), "...the experience of downward mobility was found to be humiliating and painful, with these feelings often growing into anger and depression." These feelings could, in turn, lead to other, larger social problems.

The acculturation process is closely linked in much of the literature to the acquisition of the second language and the rate of success at which one adapts to the new culture (Kim, 1988; Richard-Amato, 1988; Schumann, 1978). It was therefore, of further research interest to determine, from the perspective of professional immigrant women, how their acculturation experiences affected their ability to acquire a competent level of English and, in turn, what effect their level of English has had on their ability to integrate. These findings could be relevant to teachers of English language classes in their understanding of the dichotomy formed by the two worlds of the second language learner. There is the desire to learn the language and integrate on the one hand while there is the need to communicate and identify with their own cultural group on the other. An understanding and accommodating teacher can ease the tension and frustration often caused by these conflicts.

Reflection on the many experiences of acculturation could assist professional immigrant women in becoming more knowledgeable and understanding of their own process. It could help them to identify why they have chosen the routes they have and acknowledge the degree of success and accomplishment that many of them have experienced. In other cases, the study could help women to become aware of their personal needs in reference to their goals and what they must do to progress toward their goals.

Programs could also be designed to take acculturation struggles into account and to understand and accommodate the problems associated with the various stages. The level of acculturation at which learners find themselves may affect their success rate within a program. Many programs are of short duration; there is neither the time nor the mandate to identify at what stage a participant might be. Because the rate at which one progresses through the stages of acculturation varies (Harris & Moran, 1981), it is highly probable that many participants are accepted into a program when they are not at the optimal level to learn and not able to take full advantage of the program content. Although numerous agencies offer settlement programs to individuals on arrival to Edmonton, this service is limited due to funding shortages; often only the basic needs of the immigrant are dealt with. The long-term effects of culture shock are often not addressed and may be at the root of the difficulty many immigrants have in acquiring a competent level of the language. Without a sufficient grasp of an official language, immigrants are denied the opportunity to pursue training and employment that would ultimately lead them back into their own profession or a related one.

A number of theorists place the acquisition of the host language at the centre of the acculturation process and believe that language plays a primary and central role in acquiring the status and power essential to access the "mainstream" of the culture (Canale & Swain, 1979; Kim, 1988; Schumann, 1978, 1986).

Kuhn (1975) developed the concept of the human communication system whereby the three domains of learning, cognitive, affective and behavioral, overlap and act interdependently in the acculturation process. Kim (1988) developed a model based on Kuhn's concept which demonstrates that,"To learn the host language is...to learn not only the linguistic codes, per se, but also to gain access to the accumulated records of the host cultural experiences. To be proficient in the host language requires an understanding of not only its phonemic, syntactic and semantic rules, but also its pragmatic rules" (Kim, 1988, p. 89). Canale and Swaine (1979) describe the same holistic approach to language acquisition in their "communicative approach to second language teaching" (p. 27). Whether models such as these reflect the actual perceptions that professional immigrant women have of their acculturation process is of research interest. Also, if the findings of this study support these models, one must question the wisdom of the New Immigration Language Training Program (Government Document, October, 1991) in the limitation of funding for advanced language training.

Many of the talents and skills of our immigrant population are being wasted due to the lack of advanced language training opportunities. Is it the goal of the 1991-1995 Immigration Plan (Government Document, October, 1991) to enable immigrants to acquire only a basic level of English and remain frustrated and trapped in low-paying, menial jobs, on unemployment or social assistance? Should we not be encouraging these newcomers to feel proud to be part of Canada by enabling them to work in meaningful, fulfilling jobs and live as the professionals they are?

Scope of the Study

My first encounter with professional immigrant women was as an instructor in a job training program. Friendships developed in this participatory environment that continued after the completion of the program. Through these relationships, a respect for and understanding of the women's struggles grew. Their efforts to establish themselves in fulfilling, meaningful jobs and to gain some recognition of their former education were commendable, often in the face of adversity. Many of the women expressed a desire and a need to tell their stories in the interest of assisting others in this aspect of integration and in the pursuit of their former professions. It was within this context that the study was launched.

The questions which guided the study provided the groundwork for gaining some insight into the many factors that can affect the search for employment and training and language programs and the effect that these factors can have on one's ability to integrate into the larger community.

Many professional immigrant women base their "success" largely on their ability to find a well-paid, rewarding job within their profession or an area related to their profession, and on the respect and recognition they receive as professionals and educated women. While the process of acculturation encompasses many more aspects than that of employment and respect for qualifications, these factors are highly instrumental in the process.

Because of the magnitude and complexity of the larger picture, this study was delimited to the experiences of professional immigrant women that relate to and affect their ability to gain meaningful employment, thereby affecting their acculturation.

It is further delimited to the women who shared their experiences for the purpose of this study.

Definition of Terms

Professional immigrant women. For the purposes of this study professional immigrant women describes women who are in Canada as "landed immigrants" and who have had some post-secondary education and work experience in their home countries. This definition will include refugees (those immigrants who seek political asylum) as well as those immigrants who come to Canada by choice.

Research group. This group was comprised of myself and five professional immigrant women who cooperatively conducted the study according to the parameters of cooperative inquiry methodology outlined in more detail in Chapter III.

Internal. This reference has been made throughout the report to identify participation by members of the research group itself. For example, interviews conducted by myself with the research group members are called "internal interviews".

External. This reference includes information gathered by members of the research group from women outside of the research group. For example, the interviews conducted by the members of the research group, excluding myself, are called "external interviews".

Research participants. This term refers to everyone who participated in the study.

Acculturation. The reference to acculturation throughout is in accordance with the definition in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary; the cultural modification of an individual, group or people through prolonged and continuous interaction involving intercultural exchange and borrowing with a different culture.

Integration. The reference to integration throughout is in accordance with the definition found in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary; the incorporation as equals into society or an organization of individuals of different groups (as races).

Limitations

This study is limited by the interviewing and analyzing skills of the research group, the ability of the research participants to recall and reflect on their experiences and by my insight into the depth and meaning of these women's experiences. The following are additional limitations:

1. The instruments and interview guidelines were developed by the research group to relate directly to the problem being studied and had not been previously tested.
2. Although some of the members of the research group had research experience, some were lacking in research knowledge and techniques. I reviewed interview techniques and conducted interviews with each of them to serve as a model for their interviews. This procedure enabled them to conduct their interviews with more

confidence and to contribute more effectively and ethically to the research project. The findings, however,were limited by each members ability to establish the rapport and trust necessary for the exchange of intimate, personal experiences that a study of this nature requires.

3. The interactive nature of the methodology was limited by time contraints of the research group. As a result, much of the data analysis was completed by myself without the first-hand input and interpretation of the other members of the research group.

Assumptions

This study was conducted with the following assumptions:

1. That the research participants provided and elicited honest and complete answers to questions.
2. That the interview technique, direct observation and reflections of the research group as well as other interviewees were appropriate methods to address the problem.
3. That a sufficient number of professional immigrant women took part to produce a reliable study.

Organization of the Report

Chapter I provides some insight and background information into the factors that can affect the acculturation process, some of the efforts that are being made to address the language learning needs of the growing numbers of immigrants as an overview of the problems and obstacles faced by immigrant women and specifically professional immigrant women can be faced. An outline of the problem statement and related issues, a rationale for the study, its limitations, assumptions and definitions conclude this chapter.

Chapter II includes a review of the literature on culture shock and acculturation, as well as a review of the literature on the role that language learning plays in the process of acculturation.

Chapter III includes a description of the methodology used in the study, data collection techniques, data sources, sampling procedure, the process for validation and the framework used in the analysis of the findings.

Chapter IV outlines the findings and categorizes them thematically according to the issues established earlier in the problem statement.

Chapter V summarizes the findings in relation to the literature on acculturation models and the role of language learning in the acculturation process. Recommendations are made for improving the experiences of acculturation. Also included are reflections on the research process.

CHAPTER II

CULTURE SHOCK, ACCULTURATION AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Gaining some insight into the phenomenon of culture shock and the process of acculturation will assist the reader in understanding how these experiences affect second language acquisition and the ability and/or desire to seek a high level of communicative competence, in general. Some current definitions of culture shock are presented as well as some models of the developmental process involved in acculturation, the end result of which is the enrichment of life through the acquisition of the knowledge of a new culture. The effect that culture shock has on second language acquisition is presented as well as a theoretical overview of the premise that acculturation is essential to second language learning.

Definitions of Culture Shock/Models of the Developmental Process

Dr. Kalvero Oberg, an anthropologist, defined culture shock as a "generalized trauma one experiences in a new and different culture because of having to learn and cope with a vast array of new cultural cues and expectations, while discovering that your old ones do not fit or work" (Harris & Moran, 1979, p. 88). He goes on to say that "culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (Harris & Moran, 1979, p. 88). Culture shock has also been described as the reaction of an individual when the security of familiarity has been lost; the individual doubts his/her own competence (Brislin, 1981).

A number of models have been derived to help understand culture shock and some of the behaviors that may be experienced as one attempts to deal with this phenomenon. A review of the models of Oberg, Wright, and Adler follows.

Oberg (Kim, 1988) describes four stages of adjustments that individuals go through in a foreign environment. They are:

a) honeymoon - a stage of fascination, elation, optimism,
b) hostility - a stage of increased association with own ethnic group,
c) recovery - increasing language knowledge and ability to get around, and
d) final - adjustment as complete as possible, anxiety largely gone, new customs accepted and enjoyed.

Wright's model of "Identity Crisis" (Harris & Moran, 1979), is a developmental model that also includes four stages, with descriptions of the behavior that someone might experience in moving through each stage. Although it is typical for an individual to move through the stages sequentially, it is also possible for a person to get "stuck" in one phase or regress to a previous one. The following are the stages of Wright's (Harris & Moran, 1979) model:

1. Awareness - the individual initially feels no different in the new culture, but gradually senses some dissatisfaction and begins to question his/her identity and culture.
2. Rage - the individual questions if equality with the majority culture will ever be reached,
   - hostility is born toward the majority culture as well as toward own culture for being put in this position and for submitting to the majority culture, and
   - inner conflict and bitterness is felt.

3. Introspection - individual is more sensitive to psycho-social differences,
   - needs to know and understand cultural differences,
   - questions, and
   - experiences serious introspection.
4. Integration - individual is comparatively happy and accepting,
   - rage is mostly in control but can still erupt with negative cues, and
   - situation is under control externally, but if subjected to negative experiences, could regress.

The goal of the Identity Crisis model is to perceive self as a unique person, accepting one's own heritage and culture and its contribution to self-image, to be self-accepting and comfortable with oneself.

Adler's model, the "Transitional Experience" (Adler, 1975; Harris & Moran, 1981), also a developmental model, progresses from a state of low self and cultural awareness to one of high self and cultural awareness. As with Wright's model, Adler specifies no particular time associated with each stage and does not presume that the progression from one stage to the next will be automatic. The stages of Adler's model are the following:

1. Contact - excitement, intrigue, enchantment, new experience are seen as an adventure.
2. Disintegration - differences between cultures are noted and begin to have an impact, feelings of confusion, disorientation, isolation, apathy, loneliness, and inadequacy are felt and
   - severe homesickness is experienced.

3. Reintegration - differences in second culture may be rejected,
   - judgemental attitudes and behaviors are adopted, and
   - individual experiences anger, rage, nervousness, frustration, anxiety, suspicion, and hostility.
4. Autonomy - differences and similarities are legitimized and accepted,
   - previous defensive characteristics are overcome, and
   - person is more relaxed, self-assured, self-confident and independent.
5. Independence - differences and similarities are valued,
   - trust, humor, love with members of host culture are experienced, and
   - individual is more expressive, creative, and self-actualizing.

Whereas Oberg's model is based on the premise that culture shock is an illness and the symptoms are considered problematic and negative, the other two models recognize the human needs for personal and social acceptance, belonging, recognition and individuality. (Oberg referred, in one instance, to culture shock, as "a malady, an occupational disease" (Harris & Moran, 1981, p. 92).) Culture shock and the ensuing stages of adjustment according to Adler and Wright (Harris & Moran, 1981) are looked upon as a "catalyst" to the acquisition of intercultural knowledge, leading ultimately to a high degree of self-awareness and personal growth. Oberg, on the other hand, regards the progression to the final stage as having "survived" the process rather than having grown from it.

Many of us have had little experience with cultural shock, per se. There are many challenges, experiences and crises in life, however, during which we manifest the symptoms of cultural shock. These are called "transitional experiences" (Harris & Moran, 1981, p. 82) which require us to move beyond the safety net of our current values, assumptions and beliefs to question and re-examine the framework within which we solve lifes' problems. Depending on how we react to these experiences, we can grow and move forward in life or we can regress or stagnate and allow disruption to occur. The fact that our once dependable systems no longer work to solve problems requires us to establish new ones and in the process, we can go through the same personal changes and questioning as immigrants do when adjusting to a new country. From a theoretical perspective, this phenomenon can be explained through the dialectic perspective on change. This perspective on human development focuses on interactions between the changing individual and the changing world. It is assumed that the "gradual modifications or sudden shifts" (Huyck & Hoyer, 1982, p. 220) in biological makeup and sociocultural conditions force change in an individual's psychological operations. This approach supports the premise that "growth comes out of conflicts when individual biological and sociocultural needs do not mesh and that these conflicts are not seen as undesirable interruptions in the course of development but as the very crux of development (Huyck & Hoyer, 1982, p. 220). This seems to be the same premise on which Adler developed his model of transitional experience, with culture shock as the "very crux of development" in the process of acculturation. He believes that the symptoms of culture shock (depression, annoyance, confusion, withdrawal, hostility and paranoia) act as the "catalyst" that causes us to make the changes necessary to reach the final stage of independence. These symptoms and stages can be identified by those who are in a crisis or transitional phase of career and/or life development, with the symptoms being reflected as a disruptive or negative experience for a time. As the individual progresses through the stages as outlined in Adler's model (described above), autonomy and independence is realized. Harris & Moran (1981) describe some of the "transitional experiences" or crises that could depict themselves as threatening or disruptive and cause us to reflect and reexamine our values, priorities and life styles. A divorce, a job loss, a death, a career change, a major living relocation for a family, or a sojourn in a foreign country are all transitional experiences and can trigger an evaluation of all we once took for granted. The above examples of transitional experiences are not meant to trivialize the experience of cultural adaptation. Many newcomers experience the same losses and challenges in addition to the loss of language and culture. As with all transitional experiences, the process of adaptation may result in both progressive and destructive changes, The destructive changes, hopefully, will only be a part of the developmental process of adaptation. How one reacts to these experiences can differ depending on each individual and his/her level of preparedness prior to the transition.

Effect of Acculturation on Communication Competence

The theories and models discussed up to this point imply that cultural adaptation is usually a smooth, linear process and that if one progresses through the stages identified by various sociologists, one will adapt. The stress-adaptation cycle, developed by Ruben and Kim (1988) shows that this assumption does not necessarily apply to everyone. This cycle depicts the interplay between cultural shock and the acquisition of communicative competence. In order to acquire the necessary communicative competence to function satisfactorily within the new culture, the stranger will suffer many stressful emotional "lows". It is said that these periods of "crisis" will be temporary for most people as new ways of working out problems are discovered and as adaptation to the new environment occurs. The crisis, once managed, then becomes an opportunity for personal growth and change. The dynamics of the stress-adaptation-growth transformation (Kim, 1988) are represented by a cyclical, upward movement; with each stressful experience, the stranger draws on inner strength to cope with and handle the situation, thereby learning and growing and, in turn, strengthening the coping mechanisms to better handle future adaptive changes. This approach also supports the premise that culture shock is a positive condition and a "necessary precondition to adaptive change as well as an impetus for learning, growth and creativity for the individual." (Kim, 1988, p. 57) It should also be noted that the upward spiral is not the course taken by all people experiencing the process of adaptation. If change is strongly resisted, the stress level becomes too high and acts as an inhibitor to growth rather than a catalyst. Kim says that, "Most individuals...achieve at least a minimum functional effectiveness in the host environment" (p. 58) through the stress-adaptation-change cycle.

That "communication is at the heart of cross-cultural adaptation and that this is essentially a process of achieving the communication capacities necessary for strangers to be functional in the host culture" (Kim, 1988, p. 59), is further emphasized by the following excerpt:

> If what we can express in any present moment cannot be comprehended, or if what we can comprehend at that moment is not being expressed, our existence as humans is threatened (Thayer, 1975, p. 241).

What effect, then, do these theories of culture shock, transition and adaptation have on the acquisition of the language? How does communicative competence affect adaptation and transformation? The complexity of the effect of communicative competence on cross-cultural adaptation can best be described by Schumann's (1978, 1986) Acculturation Model for second language acquisition (described in more detail later in this chapter) and through the concept of Kuhn's (1975) human communication system as interpreted by Kim (1988). This system is depicted as interdependent and overlapping circles representing the three domains of learning, the cognitive, affective and behavioral. The cognitive domain refers to the identification and understanding of messages in different situations. The affective domain refers to motivational readiness and emotional participation in the cultural values, attitudes and emotional experiences of the host culture. It is this domain that provides some understanding of the subtle aspects of communication such as those of feelings and attitudes. The behavioral domain refers to the ability to select effective and appropriate behaviors in various social settings. "Performance" of the individual involves all three dimensions, as well as environmental factors and the performance of the other person within the host culture (Kim, 1988, p. 86).

The overlapping and interrelated nature of this system described above illustrates the importance of a holistic approach to second language acquisition such as that outlined by Canale & Swain (1979). They have proposed a theoretical framework for a communitive approach to second language acquisition which includes "three main competencies: grammatical competence, sociolinguistics competence and strategic competence" (p. 28). This theory is based on the assumptions that communicative competence involves:

> sociocultural, interpersonal interaction,...unpredictability and creativity...discourse and sociocultural context...that it is purposive and uses authentic language...and that it requires interaction with a theory of human action and with other systems of human knowledge (p. 29).

These theories exemplify the central role that language plays in all communication activities--spoken and written. Language organizes and structures the world as a representation of experiences; it enables the newcomer to think the way the native speakers think and lastly, the host language provides an instrument or tool of status and power for the newcomer within the host culture. With this status and power, access to the "mainstream" of the culture is gained and social standing is enhanced (Kim, 1988, p. 90). Immigrants, especially professional immigrants, are often required to lower their employment, social and economic status when they come to a new country, largely due to the lack of communicative competence in the language and a lack of knowledge of the ways of the host culture.

Second Language Competence and Another Model of Acculturation

There are a number of reasons why the processes of acculturation can affect the level of language competence achieved. The need for employment, the desire for economic independence and material wealth, achievement of verbal fluency, perception of funding agencies that a functional level of language competence is adequate, and minimal interaction with the host culture are but a few of the impediments to the acquisition of a high level of second language competence.

Most government language programs fund only a specific number of hours, after which time learners are required to finance their own courses. Because of the financial situation in some families, adults often forego language programs in order to work. These people seldom get back to language classes and remain trapped in low-paying, menial jobs with no hope of getting out.

Often little time is devoted to learning English beyond a functional level if families have a need to gain financial independence and material possessions. Both parents within a family are often more motivated by these needs than by the need to acquire a high level of language competence. Also, if a high level of fluency is achieved regardless of the level of competence or correctness, second language learners often become satisfied and question the need to take more English classes, especially if their work experiences are also satisfactory. These feelings of well-being can sometimes be temporary and can affect their motivation to set goals for language competence and achieve them. The second language, English in this case, is not always seen to be the passport to success because of the high level of proficiency in the first language and a high level of fluency in the second language. Acquiring correctness becomes increasingly more difficult as time goes on in these situations, often resulting in a resignation to give up their dream of working in their profession. Satisfaction, however, may be based on monetary reward rather than professional fulfillment and discontentment could be the eventual result.

Because people of one language group seek each other out in a new culture and interact predominantly with each other, often living in the same neighborhood, there is minimal language input of the second language. Some of the possible effects of these intracultural interactions are explained by the Acculturation Model for second language acquisition (SLA) developed by Schumann (1978, 1986). The central premise of this model is that "learners will acquire the target language (TL) to the degree they acculturate to the TL group (p. 379). Schumann believes that SLA is dependent upon the amount of social and psychological distance that exists between the learner and the TL culture. Schumann goes on to say that when the distances are great, the learner tends to "fossilize" during early stages of interlanguage development (Richard-Amato, 1988 p. 306). This means that although it is expected that stages of competency of a second language will occur during the learning process, with continued optimal exposure, the learner will gradually become proficient in the TL. Fossilization means that the learner has not progressed beyond the formative stages of the interlanguage in learning the second language and this interlanguage becomes the habitual way of speaking. Fossilized speakers make the same grammatical errors each time a particular word form is used. For example, "I has to go to the bank today," will be said everytime the verb "have" should be used. To change this habit requires extreme effort on the part of the second language learner (2LL). Early stages of SLA can also be characterized by a language form called pidginization. Schumann (1978) contends that "this condition begins when learners have to acquire and use a second language under conditions of restricted social and psychological contact" (p. 372). Under these conditions an interlanguage develops that is said to be "pidginized" in the sense that it is "a reduced and simplified form of the TL" (p. 372). This condition will persist when there is restricted contact between the 2LL and the TL group.

Social and psychological distance is the result of a number of factors that govern whether the learning situation is good or bad. In a presentation of his acculturation model of second language acquisition, Schumann (1986) identifies certain "social factors" that "can either promote or inhibit contact between the two groups and thus affect the degree to which the 2LL group acculturates, which in turn affects the degree to which that group will acquire the target language" (p. 380). The first factor involves "social dominance patterns" in which the 2LL group will learn the TL in relation to the dominance that one group has over the other. If the 2LL group has political, cultural, technical or economic superiority over the TL group then it will not learn the language. In the reverse situation, the social distance is also great and there will also be a resistance to learning the TL. Optimal conditions for learning the TL exist when the two groups are somewhat equal in their social patterns allowing for more social contact between them. When this condition occurs, learning of the TL is enhanced (Schumann, 1986).

Another social factor described by Schumann (1986) as affecting 2LL involves the integration strategies used by the group. "Assimilation" maximizes social contact and second language learning is enhanced. "Preservation" creates social distance inhibiting second language. "Adaptation" allows for varying degrees of social contact resulting in varying degrees of second language learning.

"Enclosure" or the degree to which the two groups share community and work facilities is another social factor that affects second language learning. Extensive sharing results in low enclosure, thereby enhancing social contact and the acquisition of the TL. Conversely, if the two groups have separate community and work activities and social organizations, the social contact will be low, thus limiting opportunities for acquisition of the TL.

Cohesiveness and size of the 2LL group also affect second language learning. Social distance tends to increase between the 2LL group and the TL group with increased size and cohesiveness of the 2LL group, again reducing opportunities for acquisition of the target language.

Congruence and similarity between the cultures of the 2LL group and the TL group also affects the degree to which social contact and second language learning takes place. Whether the two groups have positive attitudes toward each other can have a significant affect on the degree to which the second language is acquired.

The final social factor described by Schumann (1986) that affects second language learning is the group's intended length of stay in the country. The longer the intended stay, the more likely extensive contacts with the TL group will be made, thereby promoting the learning of the second language.

Schumann (1986) points out that although social factors of second language learner groups can have a significant affect on whether second language learning takes place, optimum social conditions are not the only variables that should be considered. The psychological or affective variables of language shock, cultural shock, motivation and ego permeability also can have a devastating effect on second language acquisition from the perspective of the individual.

Language shock occurs when learners fear ridicule and criticism when they attempt to speak the second language. This condition also reflects the doubts that learners feel as to whether they are expressing themselves adequately and appropriately.

Cultural shock is the second psychological variable that can affect second language acquisition and has been discussed extensively earlier in this chapter. In relation to the acquisition of a second language, the negative conditions of cultural shock are highly inhibitive to learning.

Motivation, the third affective factor, involves the learner's reasons for acquiring the second language. Whether motivation is "integrative" or "instrumental" could affect the degree to which the learner will be motivated to learn the second language and perhaps the level of proficiency that will be reached. Integratively motivated learners will learn the second language so they can become functional and communicative with the target language group because they value and admire the culture of the group. Instrumentally motivated second language learners want to learn the language for specific reasons, such as enrolling in educational courses or re-entering their professions. It is generally believed that integrative motivation is more powerful because it implies a desire to interact with the target language group. The level of proficiency, however, does not need to be very high in order to interact with the target group. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, requires that integration will take place until the instrumental goals have been satisfied. If the goal is to return to a professional career, then the level of language acquisition would be much higher. There is the risk, however, that integration will take place *only* until the instrumental goal is achieved, thus reducing the continuous social contact between the learner and the target group that theorists (Canale & Swain, 1979; Schumann, 1988) argue is essential for maximum second language acquisition or communicative competence. More recent literature refers to "intrinsic and extrinsic motivation" as being "a more powerful conception of the motivation construct" (Brown, 1991) than that of integrative and instrumental approach. Brown (1991) argues that intrinsic motivation is "superior in educational settings" because it is human nature to "seek out a reasonable challenge" (p. 247). The power of intrinsic motivation is believed to be generated from "the learner's natural inquisitiveness" and then the learner is captivated in "a process of a confidence-building, ego-enhancing, quest for competence in some domain of knowledge or skill" (p. 247). While Brown (1991) concedes that "some degree of extrinsic reward will always remain important in the language classroom," (p. 247) most successful teaching efforts are focused on intrinsically motivating our second language learners. The focus on intrinsic motivation is based on the notion that "if learners are given the opportunity to learn language for their own personal reasons of achieving competence and automony," they will have "a better chance of success than if they become dependent on external rewards for their motivation" (p. 248).

Ego-permeability relates to decreasing the learners' level of inhibitions in learning the second language, thus expanding their language boundaries and increasing the opportunities for second language learning.

A connection could possibly be made between a study conducted by Borodkin (1988) on validation counselling and the affect that motivation has on second language learning. Validation counselling involves a process using a consciousness-raising catalyst. This process motivates students to take charge of their learning and take responsibility for learning a second language to meet the requirement of whatever it is they want to do in the new country. While this process could be an example of instrumental motivation discussed above, the learner is taking control of his/her own learning while acquiring competence. The autonomy and empowerment resulting from validation counselling could also be an example of intrinsic motivation discussed by Brown (1991).

Through the presentation of these models of cultural shock, acculturation and the effect these processes can have on the acquisition of a second language (communicative competence), the complexity of becoming self-actualized in a new culture cannot be overstated. The very techniques that many immigrants use for survival in a strange culture can contribute to their failure or, at the very least, their difficulty in acquiring a competent level of second language acquisition. Because language plays such a vital role in the way groups of people view each other (TL groups and 2LL groups), every effort must be made to create 'good' learning situations as described by Schumann (1978, 1986) in his acculturation model. Throughout this experience, the learner must stay positive and open to the opportunity for individual reflection and growth.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study was based, in part, in Freirian theory and methods of "conscientization and praxis" (Freire, 1973). The notion of praxis or the union of reflection and action, is particularly relevant to this study because the data collected were of a reflective nature and required the conscientization of many experiences that otherwise may not have seemed significant in the acculturation process of many subjects in the study. As well, a certain "level of consciousness" is the catalyst required, according to Borodkin (1988) for the acquisition of a competent level of a second language. Language competence of the host culture ultimately leads to a higher level of self awareness and thus a greater degree of acculturation, according to Adler's model of "Transitional Experience" (Harris & Moran, 1981)

"Research as praxis" (Lather, 1986) in this context, "involves the researched (the women) in a democratized process of inquiry characterized by negotiation, reciprocity and empowerment" (Lather, 1986, p. 257). Lather (1986) further emphasizes that "praxis-oriented research...requires new techniques and concepts for obtaining and defining trustworthy data...(Lather, 1986, p. 270). Kirby and McKenna (1989) have called this process "research from the margins" (p. 28).

The methodology chosen to guide the process of praxis-oriented research is what Reason (1988) has termed "cooperative inquiry,". Reason (1988) describes cooperative inquiry as "a way of doing research in which all those involved contribute both to the creative thinking that goes into the enterprise--deciding on what is to be looked at, the methods of the inquiry, and making sense of what is found out--and also contribute to the action which is the subject of the research" (p. xii). Kirby and McKenna (1989) describe research from the margins as "gathering and making sense of information...in the context in which those who suffer the injustice, inequality and exploitation live their lives" (p. 7). Other terms used to describe this technique are collaborative, participative, interactive, experiential and holistic (Reason, 1988). All of these terms refer to research *with* people and *for* people rather than *on* people or "human inquiry" (Kirby and McKenna, 1989; Reason, 1988), and may be used alternately to describe, more specifically, the process of cooperative inquiry or research from the margins within a certain context. For example, the term "participatory research" is often used in grass roots studies where the researcher "dialogues with the 'grass roots' people with whom they work, in order to discover and realize the practical and cultural needs of those people" (Reason, 1988, p. 2). Education and political action are also a vital part of this process. Cooperative inquiry allows for "people to work together as co-researchers in exploring and changing their world...and to understand better some aspect of their life and work..." (Reason, 1988, p. 18). Kirby and McKenna (1989) emphasize the inclusion of "two interrelated processes" (p. 28) of research from the margins: "intersubjectivity or an authentic dialogue between all participants in the research process in which all are respected as equally knowing subjects" and "critical reflection...which involves an examination of people's social reality..." (p. 28).

To operationalize this cooperative, collaborative process, a research group which included five professional immigrant women and me, was formed. The members of the research group, through the cooperative inquiry process, were able to identify some of the factors that have enhanced or hindered their own process of acculturation. This knowledge made the women aware and conscious of why their acculturation proceeded as it did, changes they would make if they had to do it over again and advice they would give to others preparing for emigration to Canada.

The Cooperative Inquiry Model - Background Information

The research process was adapted from a model devised by McLean and Marshall (Reason, 1988) (Appendix A), in a cooperative inquiry project, conducted in England. For purposes of outlining the process from start to finish, the adapted model begins with a) outlining the project to interested participants, b) establishing the research group, c) identifying research issues and concerns, d) generating data relating to the research topic from within the group itself, e) first analysis of the impact of these experiences (group sense-making), f) planning further data collection, g) identifying research initiatives (further data collection techniques), h) journalizing reflections of research experiences, i) second analysis of the impact of acculturation experiences (group sense-making), j) compiling first draft of report ("whole picture" of participants' perspectives), k) group critique of draft (feedback, further debate of controversial issues), l) journalizing reflections of research experiences, m) rewriting/revising draft, and n) presenting the final report.

The above model was further modified at the outset of the research study. The initial plan was to report all findings to the research group (group sense-making sessions) where they would be analysed and categorized through group discussion and collaboration. It was clear that some members of the research group did not have the time to dedicate to such a lengthy process. To meet the targeted completion date, the study would have required frequent, lengthy group meetings to compile and analyse the findings of all the group members. The model was adjusted to include individual interviews between the research group members and me to accommodate the needs and concerns of the group members. The first interviews provided data directly related to the acculturation experiences of the research group members. This adjustment was so effective that the research group recommended a second individual interview be scheduled to share data that they had collected from interviewing professional immigrant women outside the research group. The group sessions, then, were for the discussion of the interview process itself, the problems encountered within the interview and how the research group members viewed the dual role of "researcher" and "researched". These issues are further discussed in Chapter V.

Characteristics of the Cooperative Inquiry Group

Two essential characteristics of the cooperative inquiry group are that it must be fully collaborative and cooperative. Genuine collaboration and cooperation contribute to the validity of the inquiry; the amount of energy and commitment the group is willing to contribute determines the outcome (Reason, 1988). It is important that the group consist of people who have a common understanding of the purpose and content of the study and also that members understand and take ownership of the process involved. This does not preclude the possibility that other issues might arise through the cooperative inquiry process and the emergent nature of the study. Reason (1988) invites those interested in establishing an inquiry group to "trust themselves" and to "get on with it". He further states that, "if your hearts are in the right place you will have an exciting time and even if the process is at times stormy and difficult, it is most likely that you and your co-inquirers will learn a lot" (p. 20).

It is usual in the initiation of a cooperative inquiry group that one or two people have an idea that will serve as the focus of the study (Reason, 1988). The formation of this particular group conformed to that characteristic since two professional immigrant women and I had agreed to be part of the cooperative inquiry group and had discussed and eventually agreed upon the content and purpose of the study. Three others joined the group; we worked together as co-researchers exploring all aspects of each other's perceptions of how and why their experiences influenced their acculturation process. As Reason (1988) explains, "this process of cooperative, experiential inquiry is an aware and self-critical movement between experience and reflection...(p. 6).

The Cooperative Inquiry Group (The Research Group)

The research group for this study was chosen from among the professional immigrant women that I had met and worked with over the past three years. They were chosen on the basis of their interest in contributing to the study, professional background, experience in conducting interviews, availability and commitment. The five immigrant women in the group had post-secondary education from their home countries as well as professional work experience. All had achieved some measure of success in finding jobs in Edmonton that were either directly related to their former profession or that were at least at a level of professional status. These women also have long-term career goals and dreams that they are continually striving to attain.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods were discussed at the first meeting of the research group. The interview was identified as the primary source of data and began with individual interviews of the members of the research group. I conducted the initial interviews and refer to them as initial internal interviews. Each member of the research group agreed to conduct a maximum of three interviews of professional immigrant women of their acquaintance or women who were referred to them by others. These interviews are referred to as external interviews.

The process of network sampling or snowball sampling, (Bogden & Biklen, 1992; Henry, 1990; Palys, 1992;) a nonprobability sampling technique (Brink & Wood, 1988; Henry, 1990) was explained to the research group as a possible means of accessing interview subjects. This process was used by research group members who had difficulty locating professional immigrant women who were willing to share their experiences of acculturation. Network sampling takes advantage of social networks and friends within the population being studied--in this case, professional immigrant women. Potential subjects were referred to a research group member by other subjects or by people whom the researcher knew. These people then made reference to others and so on, until a sufficient number of subjects had been interviewed.

Three meetings of the research group were held, the proceedings of which were tape recorded and transcribed and used as sources of data in the study.

Demographic data including former education, professional credential(s), type of current employment, duration of English classes, other training, country of origin, length of time in Canada, etc., were also collected.

Instruments

In most qualitative research, the researcher*is* the primary instrument through which data will be acquired (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 1987); in research using the cooperative inquiry methodology, the research group is the primary instrument, of which I was one member. As was expected and accepted at the onset of the study, I fulfilled a larger role in the collecting, transcribing, analysis and reporting of the findings. It was necessary to provide background information regarding theories and models of acculturation as well as the framework for facilitating and reporting the analysis. Instruction and practice in the skill of interviewing and collecting relevant information, facilitating group meetings, and writing the final report were also my responsibilities.

Interview guidelines and a questionnaire for the collection of the demographic data which provided consistency among the interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Effect of "Personal Biographies" on the Research Process

Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (1987) state that, "while it may be possible to pretend that the investigator's personal biography can effectively be isolated from the processes of quantitative research, this pretense is never possible in qualitative research. While most qualitative researchers contend that 'objectivity' is an illusion, a human state that is both impossible and undesirable" (p. 93), it is essential that the researcher maintain constant awareness of the threat of researcher bias, especially if the researcher has had any previous involvement in the research setting. In reference to this study, I have little experience with the process of acculturation other than minimal exposure during visits to a few foreign countries and one experience as a student in a French as a Second Language Immersion Program. The other members of the research group, however, have had varying, but intensive experiences that have contributed to the breadth and generalizability of the study. Caution was required in conducting the external interviews with women from outside the group so as not to influence the responses based on personal experiences. On the other hand, these experiences were the basis for asking some relevant, insightful questions. The process of interaction among the members of the research group and member checks against interview transcriptions, reports and analysis provided further protection against researcher bias.

The experiences and reflections that all members brought to the research group made a positive, rich contribution to the research process and to the study.

Protection of Participants of the Study

To provide for confidentiality and anonymity, all participants of the study (including the members of the cooperative inquiry group) were identified by the use of letters and numbers. Due to the very nature of the process of cooperative inquiry and the thick, descriptive reporting style of qualitative research, this provision is extremely important. A consent form, which included a commitment by the research group to maintain interviewee confidentiality and anonymity, was obtained, prior to the interview. Members of the cooperative inquiry group also completed a similar form. This form assured the research participants of complete confidentiality regarding their names, addresses, places of employment or any other personal data that were shared during the interview. They were also assured that there would not be any disclosure of names or incidents that could result in negative repercussions for any of the participants of the study. By using member checks, the interviewees had the opportunity to confirm, correct or delete any information that was previously collected. In addition to the above measures, I collected and safeguarded all written or taped data acquired by the research group members; I guaranteed that no copies would be made and that all interview notes and tapes would be destroyed or erased upon completion of the research project. Each member of the research group received explicit instructions and practice in the rigors of ethical interviewing and also signed an agreement to abide by such standards during all interviews. The letter of agreement and consent form can be found in Appendix C.

Validity

To fulfill the requirements of validity in this type of research, Guba (1985) recommends the enlistment of triangulation, reflexivity and member checks. Lather (1986) builds on these techniques in a reconceptualization of validity that is felt to be more appropriate for praxis-oriented research. Lather expands the definition of triangulation beyond the use of "multiple measures" (p. 270) to "consciously utilize designs that allow counterpatterns as well as convergence if data are to be credible" (p. 270).

Lather defines construct validity in terms of constructs that actually occur rather than an invention coloured by the researcher's perspective. Through the research group process, these constructs emerged in the form of the categories described later in this report as a result of the group's analysis of the data.

Face validity is realized by "recycling description, emerging analysis and conclusions back through at least a subsample of respondents" (Lather, 1986). This interpretation is supported by Reason and Rowan (1981) who say that, "Good research at the non-alienating end of the spectrum...goes back to the subjects with the tentative results, and refines them in the light of the subjects reactions" (p. 245). Again, constant member checks were made with the research group members to confirm the analysis of data. I transcribed all tapes. The transcriptions were verified by the research group members and checked against the information they had obtained from their interviews. Individual meetings with research group members for the purpose of discussing their interviews and my transcriptions facilitated this process.

A fourth means of establishing data credibility, as identified by Lather (1986) is that of "catalytic validity" (p. 272). Catalytic validity "represents the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (p. 272). The degree to which this happened was a secondary, albeit significant, reason for choosing the cooperative inquiry methodology--to test this process as an effective catalyst in transforming reality (p. 272). The extent to which this happened is discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

Lather (1986) is emphatic in stating that "an increase in data credibility within praxis-oriented research can only increase the legitimacy of the knowledge generated" (p. 272).

Timeline of the Study

Phase 1. The research group was established through networking with professional immigrant women and the first meeting was held shortly thereafter. Letters of agreement to participate in the study were submitted by all members of the research group at the initial meeting, where the parameters of the study were outlined and issues and concerns were addressed.

Phase 2. I conducted in-depth interviews of the members of the research group. Individual interviews were transcribed and later verified by each member. Any changes, withdrawals or corrections were made at that time. Permission was acquired from each individual to share the data with the research group for purposes of discussion and analysis.

Phase 3. Each member of the research group conducted up to three tape recorded interviews with professional immigrant women whom they felt would contribute to the study and from whom they had obtained written consent and permission to use the data in the group analysis process. I met with the research group members individually to provide them with the opportunity to report on their findings and to share their experiences and perceptions of the interview process. Transcriptions were made of the interviews and meetings and verification of the information was provided by the interviewee who had the opportunity to clarify, withdraw or correct any information. The research group met for a second session of discussion and "sense-making". A final meeting date was scheduled to share the research groups' perceptions of the cooperative inquiry group process.

Phase 4. I wrote the first draft of the final report and gave a copy to each member of the research group. The group checked the draft copy for accuracy of reporting and interpretation according to the information they each shared; they also shared the report with their external subjects for validation. They provided me with feedback through individual and small group meetings or by telephone. Revisions were made and resubmitted to the group for final approval. The final draft was written. Members of the research group were given a copy of the final draft in appreciation of their participation and commitment.

The First Meeting of the Research Group

The actual study and information sharing began with the first meeting of the research group. At this meeting, I distributed an outline of the proposed study which included: a) suggested issues of focus, b) an explanation of the methodology, c) suggested ways of collecting relevant information, d) a proposed interview guide, e) ethics guidelines, f) an outline for facilitating an interactive interview and, g) the role of the research group. (The outline for facilitating an interactive interview can be found in Appendix D). The research group was initially overwhelmed with information, expectations and my need for their commitment. A weekend workshop would have been preferable to adequately share all the information and ideas that I had spent the past two years collecting. After a prolonged silence, followed by numerous questions, the suggestion was made that I initiate the research process by interviewing each of them on an individual basis. This idea served two purposes--first, to provide a model by which each group member could conduct her interviews and second, to pilot the interview guidelines which had been presented to the group for their input. (Relevant suggestions from the group had been added to the original interview guidelines.) Appointments were made with each member of the research group during the following two weeks. For purposes of clarification, these interviews will be referred to as the first internal interviews.

Reason (1988) cautions the research initiator, as the facilitator, that "being too directive can contradict the process of cooperative inquiry itself or at the other extreme, being too indefinite can leave the group with no focus whatsoever" (p. 25). A combination of "clarity and flexibility" (p. 25) is recommended, with an invitation to talk about possibilities for the study, potential problems and concerns. This first meeting provided the research group members with that opportunity.

The Second Meeting of the Research Group

The next meeting of the research group served two purposes. First, two women who had already completed some of their interviews shared their findings with the rest of the group. This exchange provided a valuable example of the wide variety of information that can be obtained through an interview. This process was, however, very time-consuming. The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing this problem and possible solutions, which became the second purpose of the meeting. I was soon made aware of the feelings of some of the group members regarding the time commitment required of a such a reporting process. Some of the group members felt that this type of reporting was primarily of interest to me and that it would be more expedient for me to meet with each member individually to gather the information they obtained in their interviews. I initially felt that individual interactions would divert from the group characteristic of cooperative inquiry, however; part of the process of cooperative inquiry is to allow for group decision-making as well as cooperation, information exchange and collaboration. Since availability of time seemed to be a major issue to all members and was continually mentioned, I felt individual meetings would be an effective way to deal with a concern that could have led to a lack of commitment and breakdown of the group later on in the study. I was willing to make this concession in the interests of maintaining the group's enthusiasm and input.

The research group members would summarize the highlights of their external interviews in the individual meetings. The meetings are referred to as the second internal interviews. In addition to the second interviews, I also committed to listen to the recordings of the external interviews to verify the information that had been reported by the group member in the second internal interview. Everyone in the group felt this would serve as a check of their interpretations. The second internal interviews were conducted throughout the next three weeks.

The Final Meeting

The research group's final meeting was to discuss the research process itself and our feelings and perceptions of this type of research methodology as well as to plan the remaining work of the study.

For the first part of the meeting, I had prepared a list of "Issues for Reflection" (Appendix E) that acted as a guide for the discussion that followed.

The second part of the meeting focused on the final stages of the study, the plans for writing the first draft of the report and the process of getting feedback and input from all of the women who participated in the study. I would prepare a first draft of the findings after I had completed the second internal interviews. These findings would be reported within the categories which had been defined by the group as a result of the information I had collected from the first internal interviews and the interview guidelines. A copy of the first draft of the findings would be given to each group member for review, verification and feedback. Each member would also verify the information with each of her external interview participants. Information would be shared through telephone conversations and written comments. The final draft of the findings and recommendations would be written.

Analysis

Miles and Huberman's (1984) interpretation of qualitative data analysis provided the conceptual framework for the analysis of the findings in this study. Their model includes an interactive, ongoing process of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. The information from the original interviews had already been sorted in the transcription stage according to the subject areas in the interview guideline and each interviewee identified by letter and/or number. There were far too many categories so they were classified into the more manageable clusters by using Miles and Huberman's (1984) "conceptually clustered matrix" (p. 110). This matrix allowed for "bringing together items that belong together" (p. 110). This matrix also provided a format for displaying the data collected from all of the interviews. The research group members were coded by upper case letters, beginning with "A"; their external subjects were identified by the letter corresponding to their interviewer plus a number. For example, the first research group member's interview (the first internal interview) was coded as letter "A". The interviews conducted by that individual were coded as A1 and A2. The second research group member was coded"B", and the interviews she conducted were coded as B1 and B2, etc. This coding allowed for ease of reference in the event that information required verification; in addition, an organizational structure was provided. The clusters were listed on the left hand side of the matrix, and the interview subjects were listed according to code across the top of the matrix. On completion of the matrix, I found it provided a comprehensive, visual overview of the data or a "big picture" of the data collected. It also performed the functions that Miles and Huberman (1984) outline as a necessary requirement in choosing the format for the matrix:

> a) allows the analyst to have on one sheet all the responses of all key informants,
> b) allows an initial comparison between responses and between informants,
> c) enables the analyst to see how the data can be further analyzed, e. g. repartitioned or clustered,
> d) lends itself easily to cross-case analysis, and will not have to be redone and,
> e) provides some preliminary and agreed-upon standardization, common scaling, a set of content-analytic themes that all case analysts will be using (p. 110).

Although the process was time-consuming, it proved to be "an immediately accessible comprehensive form," so I could "see what was happening..." (p. 22).

Upon completion of the matrix, common issues and experiences were identified and cited as themes upon which to draw conclusions and make recommendations. These themes and the related data were displayed using an adaptation of a strategy that Kirby and McKenna (1989) call "hurricane thinking" (p. 146). The theme or the "eye of the hurricane" (p. 146) is placed in the centre of a large piece of paper with all the data relating to that theme displayed around it. This enabled common responses from the research participants to be grouped together in a more precise and meaningful way, relating to a specific theme. This form of clustering also made visible obvious differences in responses among the research participants.

The members of the research group were awed at the commonalities within the findings, even though the study relied on the sharing of highly personal experiences of women from a variety of countries and professions. These will be shared in more detail in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV - THE FINDINGS

This study evolved as a result of ongoing relationships with a number of professional immigrant women that I had met in a job training program. Many of us agreed to stay in touch to keep each other informed of our job search efforts, educational pursuits and personal challenges. I had also agreed to provide the women with job search assistance if they needed or wanted it in the form of updating resumés, preparing for interviews or just being there for encouragement throughout the process. Many of the women had mixed feelings regarding their job training and job search experiences and felt that changes should be made to make these experiences more rewarding and practical. They were eager to share their experiences in the interest of helping others embarking on the same journey. It was with this intent that the study was launched.

The Sample

Twelve women altogether shared their stories for the purpose of providing information for this study, five of whom were members of the research group (internal participants); the remaining seven were outside or external participants.

The Findings

The findings of this study are reported in the context of the lives of the women whose experiences not only initiated the study but became the very fabric of it.

The categories within which the women's stories are told are as follows: a) demographics (country of origin, length of time in Canada, profession in home country), b) leaving home country (reason for leaving, preparation for life in Canada, expectations of Canada), c) arriving in Canada (first experiences, first job, courses, efforts and obstacles in pursuing former career), d) impressions of integration into Canadian culture (perception of degree of happiness, feelings of wanting to return home, feelings of success), and e) advice to others who plan to come to Canada.

The Women's Stories

Demographics

There were mixed feelings among the members of the research group regarding the reporting of the first section of the demographics: the country of origin. It was felt by some members that country of origin should have no bearing on a woman's ability to integrate, whereas other members felt that problems of integration could be exacerbated by the extent to which the culture, values and language of the country of origin differed from that of Canada, not to mention the variation in climate experienced in this part of the country and the type of dress required to accommodate it. Because of a difference in opinion on whether the first category should be included, I decided to comply with Kirby and McKenna's (1989) advice. The report attempts to "reflect the voices of the participants" (p. 162) by "creating a forum for the presentation of their experiences and ideas rather than seeking the most frequently expressed or the strongest opinions" (p. 162). A compromise was chosen by identifying the countries of origin in general, rather than specific terms. These terms would allow the reader a point of reference from which to determine whether comments were made based on similarities and differences between cultures. This reference could also assist the reader to identify visible minorities and perhaps correlate their experiences to that additional disadvantage.

The women's reasons for emigrating from their homelands are identified by either choice or chance. Choice means that the individuals and their families emigrated because they chose to and that their lives were not at risk, although in two cases, the act of leaving by choice did have some threatening implications, since the families did not have permission to leave their countries. Six of the research participants left their countries by choice, two of whom were from Eastern Europe, two from the Middle East and two from Southeast Asia. The remaining six research participants came to Canada by chance and all were from either Central or South America. Those who immigrate by chance are usually classified as refugees who have left their home countries as a result of life threatening circumstances. The only choice of destination is to go to countries that have expressed a willingness to accept them. Most immigrants of chance have little time to prepare for departure, often leaving with only their suitcases or less. Such was the case for all of the research participants who came to Canada by chance.

The length of time the women have resided in Canada ranged from two years to fifteen years. One participant has been in Canada for two years, three participants for three years, one for five years, one for six years, three for nine years, one for eleven years, one for thirteen and one for fifteen years.

An economist, four teachers, two business administrators, a high school laboratory assistant, a social worker, a political scientist, a chemical engineer and a pharmacist participated in the study.

Leaving the Home Country

Prior preparation. The research participants who came by choice had much more time to prepare for arriving in Canada than did those who came by chance. Of the six women who came by choice four were quite competent in the English language and in fact, one had difficulty understanding why anyone would come here by choice if she did not know English. The need to communicate in order to meet the most basic of needs and learn to function within a strange system was described as essential to survival . One of these six women had some knowledge of English, but learned it only as a second language in school and was not very fluent. The other woman knew very little English at all.

Of the women who came by chance, three had had classes in English in grade school, but had not learned it very well as they had not felt that it would ever be needed. One woman said that it had been her husband's dream to emigrate to the United States, so he was more interested in learning English than she was. Because it was his dream, not hers, she did not believe she would ever need English. One of the remaining three women who came to Canada by chance started learning English with her family only three weeks before leaving her country to come to Canada. She felt she knew enough to function until her arrival when she realized how little she really knew. On the whole, the women who came to Canada by chance had very little preparation for what to expect from life in Canada and had access to very little accurate information before departing from their countries.

Many of the research participants spent up to three years in another country prior to emigrating to Canada, hoping that the situation would improve in their countries and they would be able to return home. Some also spent time in another country while waiting for permission to come to Canada. While this meant that many of the participants were required to adjust twice to different countries and often different cultures, they also gained some insight into the requirements of making the adjustments.

Expectations. Many of the women (especially those who came by chance) reported being misled or being given false information by the embassy and immigration authorities in the countries from which they left, not necessarily always their home countries.

The most prevalent misconception was that they would be able to pursue their careers upon arrival in Canada. One family was even told that there was a teacher shortage in Alberta and that was why they were being sent here. They were not informed of the nature of employment that they would be able to access upon arrival or the level of English that was required in order to gain meaningful employment. They also had no knowledge of the nature of the economy or the availability of even the most menial jobs. Because some of them were so eager to start a new life and take advantage of better opportunities, they did not question the information or make inquiries from other sources.

One woman who came to Canada by choice made some inquiries of people who had previously emigrated to Edmonton from her home country to find out what life was like here. The first information she received told of nothing but hardship and sacrifice, but being optimistic, she realized that these people had been here for less that two years. She then wrote for information from people who had been here for at least five years and received much more promising information. People were generally happier, had good jobs and were able to provide for their families. They had also learned English by then and had an entirely different attitude from those who had only recently arrived. Because of this prior knowledge, she was better prepared for the realities her family would encounter as newcomers to Canada.

Below are some comments relating to the expectations that the women, identified by code, had of Canada.

> D: I expected a normal, regular life with a bigger apartment in a town that is not polluted.
>
> B1: I expected Canada to be similar to my own country, but it was much more difficult because the language is very difficult to speak...it's like starting a new life.
>
> A: In my country, you have to fight and work hard for everything you get, but I thought in Canada, everything is equal and that you didn't have to fight for what you wanted or needed, but I discovered you have to fight, and harder, because this is not your country. You have to fight with the government, to get in training, to get a job. You have to be very aggressive...I was given points when I came to Canada because I was young, I was good looking and told that I wouldn't have any trouble finding a good job in my field. When I got here there was nothing and it took me fifteen years to experience the first feeling of success in my profession.
>
> D2: I expected to live in peace in Canada...that I would have to make many changes in my life...that life would be very difficult because I didn't know the language.
>
> C: When we were interviewed before coming, we were told that we could come here and continue our professions and that because we were educated we would have good jobs. When we

> got here, Canada Employment told us completely the opposite--even worse.
>
> E1: I expected only to survive...that I wouldn't be able to go to school and that I would have to get a job to live...that I would live in freedom.

Experiences on Arrival

Immediate first experiences were very similar among the research participants, with the flurry of being met at the airport, often by someone who could not speak their language, being taken to an apartment that was not and would not have been of their choosing, adjusting to the weather if their arrival was in the midst of a blizzard and they were from a tropical country and trying to understand a language to which they had little or no exposure.

The following excerpts describe some of the women's first experiences:

> C: Our only impression of Canada was one of blizzards and endless snow because of a television program we watched in our home country...we arrived in May on a reasonably warm day; our son couldn't believe that we were in Canada. He wondered when we were going to get to Canada...we thought we had a little understanding of English until we went shopping for curtains for our first apartment. My husband could speak English much better than I could so he tried to explain to the sales person what we needed. We ended up with one curtain that was too wide and not long enough and another curtain that was twice as long as the window and that we had to pin together to keep it shut...our apartment was terrible. It was dingy and poorly kept--it is still that way even now, but we were told they were all the same and this one was better because there were child care services right in the building...I was depressed for two months

after coming here. Finally, I decided that if I was going to be here I might as well learn the language so I started English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

E: We had a chance to learn a little bit about Edmonton before coming. My husband learned that there was a hockey team here called the Edmonton Eskimos so we told our children we would be living in an igloo when we arrived here. Of course, we were only joking.

B1: I cried a lot when I first came here because I didn't know English and I had to ask my husband what people were saying. Sometimes he ignored me and I got so depressed and frustrated.

D2: I felt lost when I came here. My skin was dark, my language wasn't the same. I didn't know anybody.

B: We were supposed to be met by someone who could speak our language, but the person who met us spoke Czechoslovakian, not Spanish, but we managed to communicate anyway because we knew a little bit of English.

First Jobs

The majority of the women interviewed for the study reported being offered very menial, low-paying jobs, either shortly after arrival or at the end of their government sponsorship. Most held jobs in factories (garment or food processing), hotels or in daycares. The women who were government sponsored had jobs found for them and were made to feel they had no choice but to take them. If they refused, they felt that there would be no provision for them. Because of the type of work many of them were given, there were feelings of degradation and humiliation and a feeling that they would never again have the comforts and status that they had left behind in their home countries.

Two of the women were fortunate to have their credentials recognized in Canada and were able to get jobs in their professions, one as a teacher and one as a research engineer.

Below are some of the comments made by the women who participated in the study regarding their first work experiences:

> B: I didn't want to work in the cookie factory. You have no idea how degrading the work was. There was nobody to talk to, no one could speak English. I had difficulty doing the work...we had it very easy in my country. We knew socially and financially we were in a really good position, one that we probably would never be able to have here...here we were nobody. Who we were at home didn't mean anything to anybody. That was hard, very hard...The change of status comes as a shock. You realize that you'll never have status equal to what you had at home...for a professional to have a low-paying, menial job--that is very humiliating.

> E1: Twelve days after I arrived I got a job as a sewing machine operator in a garment factory...I had never done anything like this before...it was terrible work for me...it made me very sad, but I knew I had to work to help support my family...my shoulders ached...the work was very heavy...finally after twenty months I asked to be laid off and started in a college program.

> C: I had a chance to work in a factory for $4.50 an hour. But my husband was working in a daycare making $6.00 an hour, so I took a job in the same place. The owner was very good to us and let us keep our children with us for nothing...my job at the daycare was very difficult at first, because I couldn't speak English very well. People tried to make me feel like I didn't

know anything, but even then, I told them I had more education than any of them had and the only other difference between them and me was that they knew English....I was hired by the daycare after the owner fired a Canadian woman. The other workers felt that she had been fired so I could have her job. Most of them didn't work very hard at their jobs and I did, so regardless of why I got the job, I knew I would do it the best I could.

A2: I haven't been able to get a job... everywhere I apply, they ask if I have Canadian experience or equivalency for my certificate...I don't have either requirement.

D: I convinced a daycare to let me sing and play my guitar for the children and teach them some songs from my country. Everyone enjoyed it so much, I was hired to work there.

A: No one could believe back home that I was working in a garment factory--they all wondered why I would leave home to do this. Everyone was shocked.... They had spent all this money on an education and they were proud of me and here I was working in a factory. I felt ashamed and demoralized, but at the same time, in my mind, it was just temporary, so we could make a living until we learned the language and we could get jobs in our careers...I was just throwing myself at any job in desperation. I wanted to have a job like my husband. I wanted to get out of this prison. I wanted to talk to people. By this time, I had forgotten about my career. I was sick and tired of sending resumés and filling out applications and trying to get back into my career.

A1: I felt very good about Canada in the beginning because I was accepted in my profession and was able to get a job...Since then I've only been able to find work helping an old lady...I feel my qualifications and skills are being wasted.

> D2: My first job was cleaning in hotels. I didn't feel bad, but I missed my old job.

Courses

English as a Second Language (ESL). The women's first courses in Canada were ESL classes. Only the four who were proficient in English upon arrival did not enroll in ESL classes in the first year. Two of these women have since decided that they needed a higher level of proficiency in the English language in order to successfully complete programs at the college or university level and have taken or are currently taking more English courses. All the others took at least the basic twenty weeks allowed by the government for newcomers. One took as many ESL courses as she could and completed the advanced level. She has acquired a high level of competence in all aspects of the English language.

Below are some comments on impressions of ESL courses or feelings of level of competence in English.

> E: The first ESL course I took was something like a miracle for me. I never, in my life, saw teachers who could teach English like that. In my country, we don't have such great teachers. These teachers were the best.

> D2: My English now is only enough to survive...not enough to be able to do any other kind of job.

> C: ESL gave the basic understanding of English to be able to start working, but even when I started working, I didn't understand very much. Mostly, I learned my English from the English speaking people I worked with...I think I would be able to learn English better if I could go to school longer and get some direct

pronunciation classes, but I would have to pay for them. I probably will someday because I'm always trying to improve myself, but right now I have to work....When I started ESL, I was placed in level 1 instead of beginners. That was terrible because I could understand more than I could speak. I tried to get them to move me back to beginners, but they said, "No, that's for people who have no English at all and you have some." I felt like I had no English at all and I was always so depressed and worried about not knowing enough English to be able to do well in the class, but they still made me stay in that class....Sometimes on my way to work I try to rehearse how I will answer a question or respond to a situation and then I think how ridiculous that is because I can't know exactly what is going to be said and exactly what I will have to say....Sometimes I'm not too overconcerned about correctness or saying the right thing, to a point. I think it's better to be able to converse casually and spontaneously than to be always correct...I find that I compensate for my lack of correctness in speaking by learning the job faster than anybody else and working harder....I tell my co-workers sometimes when I make a mistake, "Now you can all go home and have something to talk about tonight and have fun with." I can joke a little about my mistakes, but I don't like other people to do it.

E1: I've learned most of the English I have in my own country...I still feel that I need to learn more to be able to understand everything people have to say or to express what I want. I think my English is part of the reason for other problems--employment or discrimination...I'll never be fluent enough to become a professional in Canadian society...no matter how hard I try, I can still only express myself in an immigrant way....I didn't get accepted in a practicum for my college program because of my accent....I went to ESL shortly after I arrived just to hear Canadian people speak...the classes were far below my level of English.

> D1: Even though I knew English very well, I still had problems with intonation in regional dialects or accents

> A2: There are lots of courses, but it is the responsibility of the person himself to learn the language and know what level is needed...no one helps.

Job training Courses. Seven of the twelve women in the study participated in a government sponsored job training program. One is currently participating in one of these programs while another is currently enrolled in a college program as a regular student, one is working to qualify for university entrance and the other two received acknowledgment of their credentials, so were able to find jobs in their own professions. One of the two whose credentials were accepted is currently working as a home care worker after being laid off from an engineering job of seven years followed by three years of unemployment. The other woman taught school for a number of years, has since semi-retired and is currently working in an after-school care program. Most of the women had positive experiences in their programs and credit them for providing the skills, work experience and contacts necessary to get the jobs they currently hold. Even in the cases where the programs were entirely unrelated to their former professions, the women felt the programs had filled some role in their pursuit of employable skills, either in employment preparation, job search skills, work experience or merely increasing their network of Canadian friends. Two of the women attribute their success entirely to a job training course and plan to continue their studies in that field. There were some feelings, however, that the government could be making better use of the money spent on some of these programs by responding to individual educational needs, rather than the group response which is currently the practise.

The following comments express some of the feelings about job training programs.

> B: I think the training courses are O.K. only if they are giving you the skills you need to get a job--not any job, but a well-paid job. A lot of those courses are not doing that....I think the government would have done better if they had divided the money used for the course equally among the participants to use for programs we wanted. We could have done something better with this money than what we got. I really feel bad about the government funding these training programs and not finding out if this is money well-spent....I think there should be programs for immigrants to become exposed to the Canadian way of life, how you can adapt to the workforce, how you can adapt to the city, what skills you need in order to enter the workforce, English, what skills you have, even how you have to dress for jobs and interviews. Then immigrant women might be better prepared for taking job training programs and they might get into one that suits them better....I have to thank one of the instructors from the program. Her follow-up contact after completion of the program is one of the main reasons why I am in the job I have right now.

> E: The course made me more familiar with Canadian style of living...a multicultural country...I never before had seen people from so many different countries. It helped me to understand. I started to speak English...the first weeks and months were very difficult. I heard many different accents and learned how different people said things.

> D: A very important part of the program was the English. We acquired some office skills, but not enough to be able to get office jobs. More is needed for that and much more English.

> C: I took the job training program because it was advised by my counsellor at Canada Employment. It had nothing to do with my former profession and I wasn't interested in doing the kind of work the program was providing training for, but I went anyway, because the counsellor said I needed to do something to get some employable skills. There weren't many programs for professional women at that time, so I took it. You sometimes do what others tell you to do in order to survive.

> A: The interview that I had to get into the job training program was the first one I had after being here for ten years...finally I felt like I was going to get something for me and my career.

Other Courses. In addition to ESL and job training courses, many of the women have taken other courses in an attempt to gain skills that would qualify them for better jobs, to learn English terminology in their profession, or to simply test themselves to see if they could do it. One woman took a bank teller course and a bookkeeping course, one took an introductory accounting course and courses in early childhood training, one took psychology, and one took a course in report writing and computers. Even though one of the women had her teaching credentials accepted and was hired as a teacher, she was placed in a class for special needs children and so was recommended to take some courses in that area. She took courses during the summer and in the evenings until she received an second degree in special education.

Current Jobs

All of the women (seven) who took job training courses are currently working even though one is in a part-time, contract job and one is in a wage job, neither of which offers any job security or benefits. One searched for two years after the completion of her course before she found a better paying job, entirely unrelated to either her former profession or her training program. Prior to her current job and following her job training program, she worked in daycare which was where she worked before the training program. Four (including the two working in wage/contract positions mentioned above) are employed in jobs related to social work, one works in daycare with special needs children and one in after school care as a program supervisor. One of the women who has been in Canada the longest and experienced success immediately after arriving, getting both her credentials accepted and finding employment in her profession, is experiencing extreme difficulty finding any type of employment. She has been away from her profession for three years, much of the time unemployed, and is currently working as a home care worker for an elderly woman so she can survive while continuing to look for a better job. She identified a number of reasons for her situation, two of which are her age (she is over fifty years old) and the current economic conditions of the country.

The following comments were made by the women about their current jobs and their experiences in them.

> E: I knew that this kind of agency was the only place where I could work because of my English, when I heard people talking.
>
> D2: My job is not the same as what I had, but at least it's with children...I love to work with children.

D: Right now I am happy doing what I am doing. I have very good people working for me and the pay is quite good.

A2: I'm working now as a volunteer to help other professional immigrants solve their problems in getting equivalencies for their credentials and also with the Canadian Cancer Society and the Red Cross.

C: I applied to the organization I am working with now for two years before I got a job. I applied for every job that was advertised that I felt I could do and finally I got hired. I feel I got the job for two reasons. First, I had a very good letter of recommendation from my work experience supervisor from my job training program and I had a very well-written resumé from my friend and teacher. The second reason was my interview. I feel I convinced the supervisor of my abilities and that I had the intelligence to learn the job...At first my co-workers thought a Canadian should have been given the job because of all of the unemployment. I had to prove to them and to the supervisor (because I think she really wasn't sure of what I could do) that I could learn the job faster and do it better than everybody else there and I did it. I showed them that even though I have an accent and sometimes make mistakes when I speak, that I am intelligent and can work....I can understand from an employer's part why they sometimes question whether we can do the job. People often judge a person's ability and intelligence by the way that she speaks but that is not always true.

A1: I am doing work that doesn't require my level of education and skill, but it pays my bills. I need to survive. I don't consider myself a success at this moment, like I did when I first came to Canada, but I hope to again. The most frustrating thing for me now is that I have such enormous potential and I'm wasting it. I'm useful for the old lady, but you don't need my knowledge and my qualifications and my experience to be able to do

> housework. It's such a waste. I have very much to offer and nobody wants it and it is frustrating.
>
> B1: I am very happy with my job now as an employment counsellor...everyone is really supportive...they support my ideas, acknowledge my work and show appreciation.

Efforts in Pursuing Career

Some of the women who participated in this study have shown relentless determination and resourcefulness in their efforts to regain the professional career or one related to that which they had in their home countries. Most of the women reported having had or continuing to have difficulty in accessing information, gaining relevant training and work experience and getting credentials assessed towards meeting Canadian qualifications. Some of these women have spent their entire life in Canada in the pursuit of their goals, being only temporarily discouraged with the systems they were required to understand and function within. Most reported continuous frustration at the roadblocks that seemed to meet them at every turn. The energy and the time they dedicated and continue to dedicate to realizing their professional goals is commendable.

The long journey back to a professional job began, for most of the women, with English as a Second Language classes, many of whom initially received only the basics. One of the women, however, reported not being able to qualify for English classes because someone in the system decided she had excellent qualifications according to her resumé and had enough English to be able to get a good job. After numerous job applications and letters of rejection, she resorted to clerking jobs at minimum wage. A few years went by before she decided to try again to work in her profession. In another attempt to gain help in finding a better job from an unemployment office, she was placed through a wage subsidy program in a position in the social work field. (This woman has a degree in social work from her home country.) The work required a great deal of writing, personal contact with clients and telephone communication. Her supervisor immediately felt that her English was not adequate for the job and gave her two weeks to show some improvement or she would be fired. Needless to say, two weeks is hardly enough time to gain proficiency in a language, so she was fired. Only upon verification of this experience to the employment counsellor who had deemed her "qualified to find a good job", endless appointments and telephone conversations with the employment office and continuous requests for training was she finally approved for a training program that would give her some Canadian qualifications and work experience in her professional field. This process took fifteen years. She still asks, "Why didn't I have the opportunity, why didn't somebody give me the chance sooner?" Other women received only the basic ESL program and then went to work, while a few were able to continue with ESL courses until they reached a competent level of proficiency in English.

The next step on the journey to professional reinstatement for most of the women was participation in a job training program. These programs are ideally designed to provide the participants with employable skills, (sometimes in the area related to their professions), knowledge of Canadian culture and the workforce, employment preparation, job search skills and most importantly, Canadian work experience. The ultimate goal of these programs is full-time employment for the majority of the participants. Unfortunately, many other variables intervene in the lives of immigrant people to act as obstacles or stumbling blocks and the goal of the program is not always achieved by many of the participants. While all of the women in the study who participated in a training program are gainfully employed (not necessarily in a job related to their program), they cited many examples of less fortunate participants who remain either unemployed or underemployed, long after completion of their training programs.

Other avenues of pursuit reported in the findings included taking other completely unrelated courses in the hopes of gaining some desirable, employable skill, consulting with career counsellors, joining job finding clubs, taking job search courses, participating in programs that assist in providing relevant work experience, volunteering with organizations and agencies with which employment was desirable and getting credentials assessed.

Some of the comments about the women's experiences in their pursuit of their professional careers are noted below.

> A: I had to push and push to get my first interview for a job training program. Inside me I was very angry and frustrated and sometimes when the opportunity came, I showed my anger. I had been here for ten years and had nothing. I can feel with the people who come to me now, because that is how I felt...I said to myself, "What other courses do I have to take to get a job? How much money do I have to spend on courses for nothing and not get a job?...Once I got a letter telling me that I didn't know how to fill out an application and if I needed help I could go to this place and they would help me. Help me for what? I didn't want to go and was sick and tired of trying to get into my career...The counsellor told me that because I had all this training and could speak English very well, that I didn't need any more training and that I could get a job like she had. I told her that if she could find me such a job, I would be more than happy to work here if I had the chance. She gave me the address where I could apply,

but I told her I thought I needed English. She said, "No, your English is very good." I was again very frustrated. On the one hand I get fired from a government job because my English isn't good enough and on the other, the government is telling me that my English is good enough. They didn't understand how badly I wanted to get back into my career. I went home crying." (This woman was finally sent for English assessment and the tests showed that her speaking was adequate, but she needed a higher level of proficiency in writing.)

B: If I get to the point to where I can meet the qualifications for the job (three years of training and/or experience) and be given a permanent position, I will feel very satisified, because there are people doing this job that have a university degree. I've only had a job training program and lots of work experience in this area, so I haven't had to spend as much time and money as others to get the education they have, so if I can get certified in the way that I am doing it, I will be very, very satisified.

E1: I am taking a social work program to help me get a better job.

C: I first started working here in the daycare field and you kind of get trapped there. I didn't know what to do, I wanted to keep earning money, I didn't have enough to pay for schooling. Finally, I decided to break that circle and try to get a job in my field again. I applied to many different places for jobs and I never got any good reactions, because the first thing they asked me was, "What have you done in the last four years?" Well, I had done daycare work. What relationship is there between accounting and daycare? None, no relationship at all!...The reason I didn't go into my profession from the beginning was because I didn't know English. Before I could feel more confident with the language, a few years had past. Each year you lose a little bit more of your old career and the more you leave it, the more you lose it...Even though I am satisfied with my present job, for now, there is still a little dissatisfaction in me,

> because I like working with numbers and I know that I should be doing that kind of work. Maybe sometime in the future I will go to university and finish something related to business and accounting.
>
> A1: I have sent out hundreds of resumés, read professional journals and business directories and approached every possible company which could use my skills...I have taken some computer and writing courses...I went to job finding clubs, career counselling groups...I was only one person and there are so many.
>
> B1: I took advantage of every opportunity that came to me and I was lucky. It seemed that every job or course led to another.

Obstacles Experienced in Pursuing Career

The obstacles identified and experienced by many of the women in the pursuit of their former professions were numerous and varied.

The one that was repeatedly noted by the women as being a major obstacle was the lack of proficiency in all aspects of the English language. Those women who did participate in college programs expressed having had extreme difficulty meeting the reading and writing requirements of their courses. Most of the women, even after realizing some degree of success in acquiring jobs in their professions, still felt they needed to improve their English in some way. Regardless of the level of courses completed there were still feelings of inadequacies in casual, conversational speaking and in the appropriate use of idiomatic expressions and slang. Some of the women also felt that their ability and level of intelligence was questioned if their English wasn't entirely correct or if they spoke with a very strong accent.

Many obstacles were identified in relation to programs. Those experienced by the research participants were as follows: lack of awareness of available programs, inability to convince program "gatekeepers" of their need for a program, inadequate skills development to meet employer requirements, enrollment in a program unrelated to their former profession or to personal skills, inadequate assessment and lack of awareness of personal and professional skills and the inability to qualify for a number of other reasons. (Financial status, immigration status, former education and training are sometimes used to screen program applicants based on program target groups.)

Additional obstacles cited by the women were age, inability to gain credit for or even assessment of professional credentials, lack of Canadian work experience, having to work to help support family, being forced back into the workforce by a system that determines when an individual has had "enough" training (including ESL), lack of confidence in ability to succeed, giving priority to others in family, personal despair, lack of commitment and ambition, discouragement and defeat due to some of the requirements (some professionals are required to repeat all or most of an entire program to qualify for Canadian certification), working in temporary and contract positions with no job security, economic conditions and discrimination or biases in the workplace against immigrants.

Also mentioned as an obstacle to professional pursuits was the traditional (and sometimes cultural) obligation that women feel to remain at home to raise the children until they are at least of school age. Some of the women felt valuable time is wasted by remaining at home for too many years after arriving in Canada. Most of the English learned in the basic ESL classes upon arrival is lost, social contact with Canadians is minimal, other members of the family are learning English and the Canadian culture rapidly, professional skills are lying dormant and not being exercised and the possibility that the woman will ever practise her profession grows more remote with each passing year. One of the women in the research group was adamant that many women use this "role" as an excuse to stay home and protect themselves from the realities of integration and that it makes them sound typically "immigrant". She had worked in a daycare, caring for the children of many professional Canadians and was emphatic that if immigrant women wanted to pursue a professional life, then they too should be prepared to make the same sacrificies and adjustments others make. Her youngest child was cared for in a daycare in order for her to work and she became very impatient with women who felt they should be exempt from this arrangement. She did concede that daycare arrangements were not acceptable to everyone; however, she felt that this was a choice that had been consciously made and that those who choose to stay home should also be prepared to accept the setback in their professional and personal development.

The obstacle of discrimination against immigrants bears elaboration as this was mentioned by three women in relation to workplace experiences. One woman in the research group (C) felt that although she was hired for the job, she was required to "prove" herself because of her accent and her lack of relevant qualifications. Even though her supervisor knew of her former professional qualifications, she felt that their value was discounted because they were from another country. She also felt that her supervisor patronized her by singling her out for commendation and praise. She said, "It seemed that the supervisor was amazed at how quickly I learned and how well I did the job. Also, many of her co-workers openly expressed dissension regarding her appointment. They felt that there were many Canadians who were unemployed and that one of them should have been given preference over her. They also doubted her ability to learn the job and communicate successfully with the other staff because of her heavy accent and her grammatical errors. During the first four months of the job, she proved to them that having an accent and making some mistakes in speaking does not mean a woman has no intelligence. She feels like an equal co-worker now and credits this feeling to her work ethic, positive attitude and self confidence.

Another of the women in the research group (B) commented how some of her clients tell her she should go back to her country, that they cannot understand her and why is she taking jobs away from Canadian people. She forgets to defend herself and tell them that she, too, is Canadian and that she needs a job just as everyone else does. Again, she is being criticized and condemned because of her accent. She has no problem however with her co-workers. In fact, many of them compliment her and say that she has a "beautiful accent". She also believes that the more education that a job requires, the more respect there will be among the staff, including among supervisors and their staff.

Another instance of discrimination was cited by one of the women (E1) when she made application for a summer job. She was hired, but the supervisor later told her that another applicant was much better educated and that if the woman had been able to speak the language that the job required, she would have hired her instead. These comments were considered highly unfair, unprofessional and discriminatory by the applicant, who only wanted a chance to show that she had the skills for the job before she was condemned. Because of this experience, in addition to many other instances of discrimination, this woman is considering giving up her professional pursuits because she feels that the pain and sacrifice is too much to bear, if these are the kinds of experiences with which one has to cope. This woman is non-Caucasian.

The following comments reflect some of the obstacles the women experienced in their professional pursuits.

> B: Right now I have no job security. I cannot make long-term financial plans because I don't know if I'm going to have a job in a month. I'm also on wages without benefits. The lack of job security is a major source of stress and a major obstacle. The kind of job I do has enough stress without this.

> C: The few jobs I was able to get in my profession, the pay was very low. Because I could keep my son in the daycare where I worked and I didn't need to dress in office clothes, I was able to make more money by staying at the daycare. I had to balance my needs with my desires to fulfill myself and be realistic about how hard it was to survive with my current income and how difficult it would be with more expenses....I always feel that no matter how I speak, I know who I am and how intellectual I am and I know I'm capable. When somebody has tried to underestimate me in any of the areas that I know I'm good in, I tell them about it. That's how I learned to survive in the Canadian society because that started from the very beginning....I didn't speak very much English and I told my co-workers, 'I might not speak English, but I have more education than ALL of you,' and I knew that and I still felt good about that. You have to really fight hard. At the same time as I was trying to defend myself against all the other people, when I went back home, I was hurting inside and asking myself what am I doing here.

> A1: Canada Manpower wasn't very helpful because I don't qualify for employment skills or upgrading because I have an education and Canadian work experience...my skills are very generalized in my profession, not specialized as Canadian engineers are...I could develop in whatever direction necessary, but employers generally don't want to look at it this way when they can hire for the exact area they want...I don't have a variety of field experiences...generally, the situation is very difficult...I have sent out hundreds of applications.
>
> A: Everyone I spoke with told me I didn't need English and yet when I had my first chance to work in my career, I was fired because my English wasn't good enough...I don't think our employment offices are doing everything they could be doing. I don't think they helped me at all. All they did was look at my qualifications and tell me that I should be able to get a good job. I left them every time very frustrated and angry.
>
> A2: I need Canadian work experience to get a job...the government can't give you that...the economy is very slow all over the world so people like me don't have the chance to work...the jobs I have applied to have sent me letters saying that I am over-qualified...I need to be a Canadian citizen to work in the airport, which was where I worked back home.

Perceptions of Acculturation into Canadian Culture

For all participants of this research project, acculturation means to develop positive feelings towards the Canadian culture and to be able to live successfully within it, all the while maintaining their own languages and cultural traditions. While this process can be a monumental task for newcomers, most of the women felt they had achieved a comfortable degree of acculturation. They also identified some values within the Canadian culture that they had difficulty accepting or understanding, but which did not interfere with their acceptance of and by Canadian people and the Canadian workplace.

Nine of the women interviewed expressed feelings of contentment, freedom and comfort within the Canadian culture, although most of these women still socialize to a large degree with members of their own ethnic community. All of this group have some Canadian friends but usually just as individuals (not couples) and many of their friends have been acquired through their jobs. Two of the women felt that they divided their time equally between the Canadian communities and their ethnic communities; they have had the opportunity to share and exchange some of the cultural traditions with people of other origins or regions within Canada. Two others expressed their love of the Canadian way of life, the freedom, the ability to travel, the space, the clean air and would not consider returning to the way of life they left in their home country.

Three women were very unhappy here, one due to her inability to find a good job or get accepted into a suitable program, one because of her struggle in regaining her professional stature and her experience with discrimination and the other because she sees no possibility of working in her profession here. She expressed a desire to go home to continue in her profession there. None of these three women has any Canadian friends and one felt she had no experience with and knew nothing of the Canadian culture. She is currently in a college program and has a summer job with an agency, working mainly with people from her own country. She did express having no problem relating to the Canadians with whom she worked, but still felt she knew nothing about them, their culture or their values. One is confident that if she gets accepted into a program or finds a job, she will begin to feel happier here as she is unaccustomed to staying at home and has no family here. The third woman came here because of political problems in her home country and plans to get some training so she can work towards saving money to return home.

Although most of the women would like to or have visited their home countries, only one said she would choose to stay there, in spite of the fact that three expressed feelings of unhappiness here. The other two mentioned above feel that the political situation is not desirable for them to return to their home countries, but they would return if they could. Even though they are not happy here, they will continue to search for meaningful jobs to help them accept the reality of their lives. The woman who wants to go home has been in Canada for seven years, while the other two whose countries are politically undesirable have been here for three years. While many of the others had longed to return to their home countries at one time, they now realize that things in their countries have changed, that they have changed and they likely would not "fit". Also the standard of living in many of the countries is less affluent and reliant on material possessions than that of Canada, so most of the women realized, as do their families back home, that they are in much better positions here. Four would like to retire to a warm country where their language is spoken.

Many of the women had difficulty with the concept of spending their last years in a home for the aged and, in their old age, would like the comfort and companionship of their families. Because of the vastness of this country, they realize that their children may not even live in the same part of the country to be able to take care of them or they may not have the means to make this arrangement feasible.

Another practise that some of the women had difficulty understanding was the need for grown children to leave home before they are married, even though they were finished their education and had good jobs. In many countries, children live with their parents until they are married and even afterward until they can find or can afford their own living arrangements. To leave home just to be independent was not acceptable to many of the women in this study.

Some of the women with children expressed frustration with their children's behavior, saying, "They are behaving like Canadian children", with the implication that Canadian children lack discipline and respect for their parents, another Canadian characteristic undesirable to all of the women in the study who have children.

None of the women felt that their culture or language was directly threatened by the Canadian society although, through the integration process and the constant contact with Canadians in the workplace, two women noticed recently that they are thinking in English, rather than their first language. Even though they have no fear of losing their first language, they do believe that they could lose some of the more sophisticated vocabulary and writing styles. All of these women felt able to maintain both their culture and their language, but the women with children expressed having increasing difficulty with this, especially with younger children who were born here and whose first language is English. It is taking a concerted effort by these women to teach their children their first language.

While only one woman felt forced to adopt some Canadian practises to be able to work in this country, most others agreed that it was a requirement to meet the Canadian way of life at least half way in order to be accepted here. This was, however, expected, not imposed and was felt to be a necessary part of the acculturation process.

Some of the reflections of the acculturation process are more adequately expressed in the women's own words.

> E: I know now that it takes more than three years to know and understand completely what is going on in Canada and at least I am starting....People coming to Canada need to see and to know what it is to be a Canadian. Many people come here with the wrong idea about democracy and multiculturalism. They need know what a Canadian is and how to become one, instead of bringing all of their problems from their homeland to Canada....I didn't think I would ever be able to buy books in English, but now I do. I feel that I'm just starting to understand the nuances of the English language.

> B: I feel confident that I can do whatever I want to do here now. I feel comfortable enough with English to be able to use it however I need to. In spite of my confidence, I still feel uncomfortable talking to some people....I still feel like a Spanish woman in the Canadian culture. Although I have my citizenship, I still don't feel Canadian really. It just doesn't feel natural to say I am a Canadian....I don't think it matters what country you come from, you are still not Canadian. We are all hyphenated Canadians....I find myself thinking in English and prefer reading in English and watching English television, even though there are many movies and programs in my language, I don't like them....My children feel Canadian. They speak English without an accent so it's easier for them to feel Canadian. I have a hard time making them speak Spanish. I tell them in Spanish, "I don't understand, speak to me in Spanish." They start and then end up speaking in English.

B1: People need to overcome the situation that brought them here by chance. Those things can't be changed. Only our attitudes can change and only when they do will we be happy in Canada....I realize now that Canada has its problems too, like everywhere else. It isn't the land of milk and honey that I used to think it was. People struggle and have hardships here too.

C: I feel good being here, not because I'm being accepted by others, but because I'm accepting being here....I don't really feel the need of becoming or acting as a Canadian because I know this is a multicultural society so you can really be your own person and still be part of the Canadian society. As long as people accept me as who I am and where I came from I don't have any problem with that. I know I will never be able to get rid of my nationality or my heritage or my accent....Even though I feel that I have adjusted quite well and I relate well with my Canadian friends, I still get worried when I have to get into a new group of people and see their reaction. I don't know how they will accept me and if they will make me part of the group. If they don't accept me as part of the group, they are showing their ignorance. I don't see why they have to remark about who I am. I'm another person, that's all. Just because my first language is not English, that doesn't mean I'm different or that I'm stupid. I do speak English, not always correctly and with an accent, and I do understand everything about the English language....I enjoy telling people that the only difference between them and me is that they have been in Canada longer. They don't understand what I mean until I remind them that everyone in Canada is descended from immigrants except the native Indians. They don't see it that way, but that's the way it is....It has to be a mutual agreement to tolerate each other. Some people have more difficulty relating to people from other countries and sometimes you have to give them a little help to get to know more and understand that we aren't here to change anything but to contribute to and enrich the country....I don't feel any different from any of my Canadian friends. I enjoy going out with them and talking with them and I only remember that I'm not Canadian when I want to express myself and I can't find the right words....I tell my children, 'From the door out, it's Canadian, from the door in, it's Spanish.'"

D1: Integrating into Canadian life without losing your traditions, language and customs is essential for maximum communication and minimal discrimination.

E1: I don't feel part of Canadian society....I try to cope with Canadian culture, it doesn't affect me....I love my culture and traditions, read books of my language and am still very connected to my own country because some of my family is still there.

D2: I feel like I fit more now....In some ways, I feel forced to adopt Canadian ways, but in other ways--like my food, I still have my culture. I want to keep the good things from my culture and learn the good things about the Canadian culture.

A1: I love this country because I can compare it with the system and the things that were happening back in my home country....It is much better here although all my family is there....I am open to going back someday, but for now, this is my country of choice and I am quite happy.

A2: I think if I could find a good job I would feel happier.

B1: In some ways I feel Canadian, like in my work....I probably will never feel like a total Canadian because I try to keep my values, my culture....I take whatever I feel is good and fits with my values.

Long-term Goals and Dreams

In spite of the time and energy many of these women have spent in the pursuit of their original professions or new ones, they all have goals and ambitions for the future. Even the three women who said they weren't happy here and did not feel that they had succeeded in integrating had goals. These three women also stated that their feelings about integration and acceptance here could change if they could experience some success and begin to realize their goals.

All of the women had goals related to their careers, their current jobs or acquiring more education or training except for the one woman who is semi-retired and feels that she has been fortunate to have realized all of her career goals and is even working in a job related to her profession. She would like to travel and to enjoy life to the fullest.

In addition to improving their jobs and educational level, many women wanted to work more in community development, helping immigrants like themselves through the integration process. They hope to apply their experiences and work for change in the areas in which they had difficulties and found obstacles.

Advice to Other Professional Immigrant Women

The women contributed a wealth of advice to potential newcomers to Canada. The suggestion that was common to all respondents was to either start learning English before coming to Canada or begin learning it as soon after arrival as possible and to continue with courses until a highly proficient level was reached in all areas of the language. Many women felt that a high level of communicative competence was fundamental to success. Without English competence, the time commitment required for success in job training and other programs was reported to be overwhelming. One woman said that if a Canadian student spent three hours on an assignment, she could expect to spend twenty-four hours. Another woman reported that she went for days without sleep trying to meet deadlines. Another could not remember the number of times she wanted to quit and only persevered because of the support and encouragement of her family, friends, classmates and instructors. Such stress might not have been experienced if these women had had greater proficiency in English.

The wise use of time immediately after arrival was central to the advice given by a number of the women. They felt that they had wasted valuable time by either staying at home or working at menial, low-paying jobs. If they had begun to pursue a career earlier, perhaps they would have felt success and reward much sooner. Related to this suggestion was the recommendation that a person's skills be assessed according to what their profession was in their home country, their personal attributes and their interests. Accurate skills assessments were also felt to be fundamental in procurring a suitable job and an appropriate training program. Newcomers need to be aware of their own skills and emphasize the ones that are useful in finding a job.

The driving force behind many of the women who participated in this study was relentless determination, a positive attitude and an aggressive nature. Without these characteristics many of these women would have given up long ago; it is these characteristics that these women feel will provide positive results. Many advise, "Don't give up until you reach your goal."

One woman (E) believes that while one must be optimistic, there is a need also to be realistic. "Be prepared to have to learn new skills or to begin working at a lower level job than what you had in your home country" and that "you likely won't work in your own profession for a long time, if ever."

While many of the women felt that they were given false expectations by authorities in their home countries, one woman (A2) feels that it should be mandatory that complete and accurate information be made available to all potential newcomers so that they can "learn their fate" and therefore be better prepared or perhaps not come at all at that time. She is emphatic that all information should be available regarding credential equivalencies and training opportunities, that language requirements should be made explicit, that the current economic situation should be explained, that job opportunities or lack thereof in all areas of work be outlined and that potential newcomers should be made aware of all of the employment barriers, employment requirements and types of jobs for which they will most likely qualify upon arrival. This advice would only be of benefit to those newcomers who choose to come to Canada. Those who come by chance must make the best of whatever circumstances await them in their new homeland.

One woman's (E1) experiences in Canada have been so devastating and discouraging that she recommends that if at all possible, people should remain in their own countries, especially professional people. She feels that life here for a professional will never equal that in the home country and that the effort required, the obstacles encountered and the discrimination that one is subjected to do not make the move worthwhile.

The final suggestion was to "come here with your eyes open and don't expect Canada to solve all your problems and give you everything. You must work hard for everything you get (A1)."

CHAPTER V

DISCOVERIES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The process of cooperative inquiry required the research participants to conscientize their many and varied experiences of acculturation and to reflect on how these experiences had affected their process of acculturation. These reflections resulted in many self-discoveries through which the women were able to explain their own actions throughout the process.

Advice to others and recommendations for improvements in the many systems and organizations encountered by newcomers to this country were also made.

Factors Affecting Acculturation "Keys to Success"

In reviewing the interview transcriptions, the display matrices and the hurricane thinking charts, it became evident that, based on the experiences and perceptions of the women who participated in this study, there were three common factors that were instrumental in the acculturation process. They were: a) language competence, b) relevant employment, and c) attitude. Each of these factors will be discussed individually in relation to the findings and the literature.

Language Competence

A high level of proficiency in the English language was a factor that was deemed "fundamental" to the integration process. Even those women who came to Canada with a good command of the language found it necessary to take more courses, either to qualify in college programs, to meet work requirements, to increase their chances of success in their professional pursuits or to become more competitive in their job search efforts. It was expressed by those who had no command of the language upon arrival, that they experienced frustration, humiliation and degradation at every turn. Even after being accepted into English classes, feelings of boredom were expressed when being forced to go back to school at an elementary level in the area of language when they had just completed a university degree in their home countries, some of them attending for as many as five years. They came to Canada only to sit in classes again to learn the basics of the English language, much of the content of which had no relevance to what they needed or wanted. It was understood that with no English whatsoever, beginnings were necessary; however, the content was often felt to be unrelated to their immediate needs. Also, once they were in the workforce, they felt there was little opportunity to pursue further courses in English.

Based on these findings, it is imperative that programs such as LINC (1990), expand their focus to provide more than the basic level of English to all immigrants arriving in Canada. Currently, only 20% of the funding is allocated to providing advanced English through the Labour Market Language Training Program. Even with the completion of the advanced level of this federal language program, there will be little likelihood of meeting the requirements of programs other than basic job training programs (ATESL, 1992). Even though the government's intention is commendable and the provision of basic English should not be downplayed, the program should not halt there. What will be the outcome of people entering the workforce with only a functional level of English? Where and how will they receive the advanced levels that they so desparately need and that this study showed was "fundamental" to successful integration? These questions all lead one to further question, "On what parameters are such language programs established?" With emphasis on basic English only, the women who participated in this study would not have achieved a level of language competence high enough to enable them to pursue their professions. Three of the women reported ineligibility to qualify for language and job training programs because their English speaking ability and/or their level of education and skills listed on their resumé was deemed "good enough to get a job". This "assessment" was questioned only after one of the women was fired from a clerical job due to a lack of English skills. Another contradiction to these spontaneous assessments of language skills was illustrated by the difficulty that some of the research participants reported in achieving success in college programs. As well, the majority of the research participants reported the need to acquire more English to be "completely communicative". Will these attitudes and judgements not perpetuate the dilemma of professional immigrants by giving them only sufficient English to get a job, but hardly enough to pursue their professions?

Relevant Employment

The above question leads to the next factor that was identified as affecting the acculturation process of professional immigrant women--type of employment. There were suggestions that, with the frustrations and lengthy process in getting credentials assessed, many women give up the hope of working in their professional field. The study of professional immigrants in Alberta, referred to earlier in this report (Alberta Career Development and Employment, 1986), showed that only 13% of the respondents had jobs at the same level as in their country of origin; another

7% were attending university to meet Canadian professional standards. The remaining 80% were either unemployed, underemployed or in initial stages of settlement (less that one year in Canada). Is this the future to which professionals immigrants coming to this country can look?

It was felt that the longer a person is away from her profession, the less likelihood she will have of returning to it. Rather than channeling professionals into meaningless, unrelated jobs or taking job training programs that are designed only to make the participants "employable" and not necessarily in their area of skill or interest, it was suggested that work experience opportunities be made available in cooperation with established professionals so that relevant experience could be obtained. This experience could perhaps complement or lead to courses that would bridge the gap between what they have and what they need. Since many of the programs currently being offered are funded by governments and agencies, it would seem feasible that this proposal could be a viable alternative and could receive funding from the same sources as the job training programs.

Associating professionals with professional jobs would be one method of accelerating the process of acculturation by reducing the social/psychological distance between the newcomer and her professional community. Schumann (1978, 1986) argues that successful acculturation is highly dependent on the degree to which the newcomer relates to the target group which, in turn, reflects the degree to which the newcomer will acquire the second language. In the case of immigrants to Canada, the target group could refer to the larger community of the country itself or the community of professionals or any other group with which the newcomer would like to affiliate. In other words, the more distance there is between the newcomer and the target group, the lower the degree of acculturation and therefore the more difficulty experienced in learning a second language. If professionals are placed in menial, mundane jobs with no interaction with people of their own profession or even with people who are English speaking, then their process of acculturation will be impeded, thus impeding their acquisition of the language which they need in order to realize success in their profession. Also, many professionals get "stuck" in an unskilled job by the "overwhelming barrier" (B) that the lack of language builds.

Being caught in this cycle is felt to be one of the major detriments to professional development. It was not until one of the women in the study, (C), was refused a cleaning job because she was over-qualified that she realized she had more skills than what was needed for cleaning. Her resumé displayed her professional qualifications, but she had never made a connection between what she had done in her home country and what she was prepared to do here. Because of the barrier set up by her lack of language skills upon arrival and the types of employment she was offered, she never expected or even dared to think that she would ever be who she had been in her own country. It took her eight years to start to believe in herself again and work toward finding a more meaningful, well-paying job.

While the women believed that perhaps there is a certain "readiness" in the pursuit of a career and in the acquisition of a competent level of English, they are convinced that the process should not take the years and the frustrations that many of them have experienced. Although the majority of the women in this study can be said to have experienced some degree of professional success, one must also look at the number of years spent in that pursuit. As one woman questioned, "Why did I have to wait fifteen years before I could work in my profession? Why wasn't I given a chance sooner?" This woman wanted more than "a job"; she wanted to work in her profession; it took her fifteen years before she was able to realize her dream.

Attitude

The third factor affecting acculturation that appeared again and again throughout the findings and which was cited by a majority of the participants was that of attitude. "I always doubted that my skills were good enough to do the job and wondered why they hired me...the director said she liked my positive attitude" (B1). "Being accepted depends on my attitude and how I react to situations here" (C). These quotations are from two women who perceive themselves as having achieved some success in gaining respectable, fulfilling jobs. Neither woman feels she has reached her ultimate career goal and both take advantage of all the educational and employment opportunities they come upon. This is an example of how attitude can foster the determination and tenacity many of these women have displayed in their struggle for professional acceptance and recognition. A positive, optimistic attitude has enabled them to seek satisfactory alternatives if their goals are too distant from reality. It has enabled them to accept compromises if their qualifications were not readily transferable and it has enabled them to struggle through courses against many odds. Developing this positive attitude was identified as another of the "fundamental" requirements to successful integration. In spite of the adversities and obstacles that many of these women have faced, most of them were very optimistic and looked at this country as one of "many opportunities". One of the women who had come here as a political refugee summed up her change of attitude by saying, "I think now I live here by choice, not by chance. This country has a lot to offer and I have a lot to offer it (B1)."

Relationship Between the Findings and the Literature Review

A number of models of acculturation were presented in Chapter II of this report and in reviewing them in relation to the findings of this study, it is probable that all of the models could have relevance, in some way, to the experiences of the women who participated. While the earlier models describe various stages through which an individual progresses in a foreign environment, the research participants' experiences tended to "fit" best with the behavioral model of Adler (1975). His model, "Transitional Experience," progresses from a state of low self and cultural awareness to one of high self and cultural awareness. It was this state of low self awareness to which many of the women attributed their delay in pursuing their career or even a related one and what kept them in the menial jobs that many of them held for so long. "One of the things that contributes to your low self-esteem is that you don't know the language so you feel really self-conscious about it and really, if you don't speak the language, you are very limited" (B). It could also be the reason that many of the women participated in training programs that were unrelated to their professions or their interests. They seemed to have "forgotten" what they had done in their own countries and did not look for jobs in which those skills could be applied. One woman still gets angry when she thinks of the skills she used in her after school care job and how little she was being paid. Had she been conscious of her abilities, she may have been able to find a more fulfilling job as a teaching assistant.

Adler's model also looks upon the negative aspects of adjusting to a new culture as the "catalyst" which will ultimately lead to a high degree of self-awareness and personal growth. In reviewing some of the experiences shared by the women in this study, these negative feelings and experiences seemed to have done just that. This is the likely explanation for why some of these women were able to persevere for as many as fifteen years to realize their goals. It does not explain, however, why some women keep striving to attain their goals while others give up. The individuality of human nature and how one reacts to circumstances is the probable explanation for the differences in how these women experienced acculturation.

While Adler's (1975) model applies to the experiences revealed in this study, the model is depicted as a linear progression, which does not realistically portray the events within one's life. He does explain, however, that progression through the stages is not necessarily time-related or systematic. Ruben's stress-adaptation cycle (Ruben & Kim, 1988) more aptly displays the interplay between the stress of cultural shock and acculturation which, in this theory, is closely related to communication competence. The upward spiral of this model demonstrates how, with each stressful experience, the individual draws on inner strength to cope with and handle the situation, thereby learning and growing and, in turn, strengthening the coping mechanisms to better handle future adaptive changes. Perhaps this is another explanation for why some of these women were able to continue working toward their goals for so many years. This approach, as does Adler's, defines cultural shock as a positive condition and a "necessary precondition for learning, growth and creativity for the individual (Kim, 1988, p. 57). The women who feel "successful" have used their negative experiences as the catalyst for further "learning, growth and creativity...(Kim, 1988, p. 57).

Recommendations for Improving the Process of Acculturation

The theories of acculturation referred to above accept that, inherent in this process are hardships, struggles and setbacks. While this was affirmed by the research participants, they had a number of recommendations for making the process less painful.

It was felt that much more assistance and counselling could be provided to newcomers immediately upon arrival to increase their awareness of employment opportunities, and language and training programs. Because the majority of newcomers must work shortly after arrival and require a social insurance number, it was felt that employment offices are in the position to provide these services. Sensitive, informed, understanding counselling staff in these offices could accelerate the initial phases of acculturation with the provision of a one-stop information service.

As well, more accurate information needs to be disseminated through the authorities in the countries of departure. While the federal government has since taken some steps to improve this situation, it was felt that many of the problems and disillusions experienced by these women were the direct result of having been given misleading information before coming here. In addition, where possible, potential newcomers could be better prepared prior to coming by having at least some knowledge of the language and the cultural expectations of the country.

In spite of the anxiety attached to an experience such as relocating in a completely foreign country, newcomers were encouraged to value the skills, qualifications and experiences developed in their homeland. Even if the same type of employment is immediately inaccessible, the newcomer must believe that she still has the basic attributes, intelligence and skills that served her in her homeland. With this attitude, there can be hope that life will improve with acquisition of the language and knowledge of the Canadian culture.

Whether or not the newcomer is a visible minority, the research group felt many Canadians can have discriminatory attitudes towards immigrants and that this information should be shared in preparation for any such encounters. As one of the women said, "We have a responsibility to help Canadians to understand our feelings and our needs and sometimes all it takes is the time to explain things to them (C)."

Another recommendation was that newcomers need to be aware that they will have to make some changes in their lives, that things cannot be and will not be as they were in their home countries. Immigrants may need to develop new skills to gain meaningful employment, in spite of the fact that they may have professional qualifications. They may need to change some of their cultural practises and that, most of all, they need to become Canadians. This does not mean that forfeiting the first language and many cultural traditions is necessary, but that a concerted effort must be made to get to know the culture and to find a way to live within it. As one woman phrased it, "Integrating into Canadian life without losing your language, traditions and culture is essential for maximum communication and minimum discrimination (D1)."

Reflections on the Research Process

The following analysis is reported in the context of the process of the cooperative inquiry methodology.

A final meeting of the research group was held for the purpose of reviewing and critiquing the research process from the perspective of each research group member. The group members were provided with an outline of the issues that I felt needed to be reviewed with an invitation to add any of their personal feelings and concerns. Unfortunately, only four of the members were able to attend, but due to time constraints on everyone's part, it was decided that the review would proceed as scheduled. The missing members were interviewed individually, later, for their input.

The following paragraphs contain the results of the meeting, categorized according to the issues identified in the guideline.

Feelings of re-living experiences of acculturation. The women felt that they had come to terms with their lives in Canada and with their experiences in the process of acculturation. Looking back, it becomes historic--they had survived and felt some measure of success in their lives. The reality of the experiences and feelings at that time and the relevance of the experiences in their lives were not, however, altered. There was still a high level of emotion felt in re-living some of the more unpleasant experiences, such as the frustrations of learning the language, trying to gain acknowledgement for their credentials, accessing suitable training programs, dealing with the systems--social services and unemployment--working in menial jobs, or having to defend their intelligence when people patronized or ridiculed them for not knowing the language.

It was also felt that re-living their own experiences helps them to remember and to relate more immediately with newcomers and the feelings that they are experiencing. They felt that it was important to realize that many immigrants are at a stage of emotional upset, depending on their experiences here and the circumstances under which they have arrived. They need the physical presence of support, somebody to be there, to show them, to take them by the hand. The women realized that sometimes, after being here for awhile and experiencing some element of success, immigrants themselves can be impatient and unsympathetic to newcomers who aren't trying to help themselves in the ways that they now know are essential to success in Canada. The attitude is sometimes adopted that, "If I did it, so can you" or "everyone has to endure the hardships the same as I did." Through their own experiences, these women understand that acculturation is a process and that circumstances and personal reactions to these circumstances can be misinterpreted by those who have not lived the process.

None of the women had any difficulty discussing their experiences in vivid detail; however, they emphasized that they felt that way because they all knew me very well and felt comfortable talking to me.

Experiences in accessing subjects for the interviews. One research member reported that she felt one of her subjects didn't share her experiences as freely as she might have if the interview had not been tape recorded. She seemed to have reservations about what the tape would be used for and who would listen to it. There was some speculation that she was embarassed about her ability to speak English and that I would be assessing her English, rather than just listening to her story.

Some women reported that potential subjects were hesitant or refused to talk about their experiences because the experiences were too unpleasant and depressing and they only wanted to forget. They didn't even want to try to come to terms with their experiences. It was speculated that perhaps the pain of the process was too intense and they didn't want to re-live that or that perhaps because they didn't want to share experiences that might jeopardize their dignity in the eyes of the interviewers. All external subjects were known to the research group members in some capacity or another--some were friends, some co-workers, some belonged to a common organization, some were clients.

One of the research group members commented that she had no idea that initiating the interview would be so difficult--to get responses from the interviewees to the questions and to carry on an interactive interview.

One member reported that one woman who she contacted but hadn't interviewed yet had phoned her to ask her when she could be interviewed, she was so eager to tell her story.

There was some disappointment among the research group members with interview subjects who participated only because they were friends and not because of their commitment to the study. The women who experienced this response had difficulty understanding the lack of action and interest in helping others.

Experiences of acculturation, awareness or level of conscientization and action taken or would take if going through the same experience again.

The research experience reaffirmed the women's feelings of what is necessary to successfully integrate by hearing almost the same opinions, experiences and perceptions from many of their interviewees and each other.

The responses to the request for advice for other professional women thinking about emigrating was especially consistent. The common response was to take extensive English classes upon arrival, become involved in a program in which you can begin a career and complete the program to better prepare yourself for a good job, have a positive attitude and do not give up.

One member of the group said the study made her question why she wasted so much time sitting at home rather than getting into some career much sooner. She feels that she could have been where she is now, much sooner.

There was also the feeling that there are only limited job opportunities for newcomers who have little knowledge of English. Opportunities that require the use of the first language are often welcomed by immigrants because of the comfort that the ability to communicate provides. These jobs, however, are very few and are often voluntary or low-paying.

One woman said that only now (after being here for more than three years, having taken English courses, a job training course and working) is she beginning to feel that she can understand the language around her and the nuances of the language.

It was pointed out that even though many professional women have the same feelings about their experiences in retrospect (i.e. they would do things differently the next time), sometimes circumstances prevent them from doing what they would really rather do, even if they were to repeat the process of coming to a new country. For example, some would still feel obliged to contribute financially and postpone their own training, placing the needs of their children and husband at a higher priority than their own, etc.

There was a realization that it may take a certain length of time to feel comfortable and have confidence in one's skills (interpersonal and linguistic) and the system to be able to make the decision to pursue a career and feel as though there is a chance of success. (Reference was made to the saying, "If I had only known then what I know now...") It was also felt that everybody has to go through the process of learning the culture and feeling confident in order to be "ready" to take up the challenge of pursuing a career. Perhaps there is some connection here to the teachable moment or to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Some of the difficulties were shared of two of the research participants who took a college diploma program after having been in Canada for six and ten years. They often wanted to quit and may have had their families and instructors not provided them with constant encouragement and support. One of them remembers the struggle and the frustrations and the difficulties and referred to it as a period in her life she wants to forget. She said, "It was a nightmare, but it was worth it (A)." One external research group member's (E1) college and job search experiences were described as "discouraging" and "hopeless". At first the rejection and criticism made her work harder and study more so she could speak better. (These experiences would be a "catalyst" that Adler (1975, 1986) and Ruben (Ruben & Kim, 1988) say contribute to the learning process.) Now, after experiencing many rejections and biases of Canadian employers and organizations, she feels that she will never meet the expectations of the Canadian employers. "I want to break through the barriers, but too many people aren't acceptant of others and the problems faced by refugees and immigrants...I don't know if I can endure another struggle." This story reflects the findings of a study conducted by Ho (1990) that there are "inconsistencies between national goals of cultural integration and practises of many adult education programs in Edmonton which imply assimilation as a condition of participation (p. 94). Ho (1990) further states that, "The result of such an orientation is systemic discrimination against members of cultural minorities "(Ho, 1990, p.94). The woman describing her experiences above (E1), agrees that to succeed, she must speak and act as a Canadian and that there is little understanding of her as a refugee. She attributes her problems to many factors, but says, "Language is always the major obstacle...I am sad because of the difficulty we have as professional people...I always thought we had to accept discrimination because we were the newcomers, but when it happens, it is very sad."

Another member of the group referred to one of her clients as "having it all" and she had only been here for five years. She was perceived as being "lucky" or "in the right place at the right time". Discussion followed on the meaning of success. To some of the women, having a well-paying, fairly rewarding job and being able to make a significant contribution to the family finances was success, and perhaps enough for the moment, whereas others needed to feel fulfilled in their jobs, to feel "professional" and if the job paid well too, that was a bonus.

There was also a perception that if, when you come to Canada, you end up in the "right" place (e.g. one woman immediately became involved with a settlement agency that served her people and was able to access many opportunities she would not have had otherwise), things are much easier. This woman had access to information about programs and how to get into them with the facilitating agency backing her and acting on her behalf. She accessed three different programs before she found one that she wanted. While in that program she was told (by the facilitating agency) which organization would be most likely to hire her after her work experience. She insisted on being placed with this organization to do her work experience and was offered a job on completion of the program and is still working there at more than $12.00/hr. It was felt that if the system can be manipulated or the right person or agency helps in the access of the right opportunities, chances of success are much higher.

There was a strong opinion that there needs to be more direction for professional immigrants to help them access information about required levels of English and appropriate job training programs. Also, counsellors in Canada Employment were criticized for judging the extent to which professional immigrants need additional training. It is felt by the counsellors, according to the experiences of these women, that because some immigrants have good education and certification, they should have no problem getting a job and that is what they are told to do. There is no information about where to look for other services (other settlement or employment agencies, for example) or even where to go to find a decent job. It was felt that the counsellors attitude is that any job should be satisfactory. "You are over-qualified," the women were told.

The changes the women would make if emigrating again, were to make more effort to learn the language sooner, be aware of their own abilities and skills as professional women, not discounting those skills just because they are in another country, accessing information about jobs that could use those skills, not accepting a menial job as a way of life, but only as a means to an end. "Understand that your identity is yours in spite of the language barrier--that you have learning skills and the language can be learned to enable you to access other opportunities--that it shouldn't be the unmoveable obstacle that prevents you from maintaining your self-esteem, setting goals and pursuing them (C)."

Also, it was felt that the professionals' backgrounds should be respected and acknowledged and that strategies be put in place to assist them in returning to their professions. Many immigrants believe that they will never again work as a professional and that those opportunities are only for their children. One woman in the research group came to this realization only after participating in this study. "When you arrive in a country very different from your own, you don't expect to be able to maintain any consistency with what you had back home. There is the acceptance that you leave everything behind--your career, your education, your family, your material possessions, your language and you become somebody else here. You don't think of what you had but what you need to survive and to make life better for yourself and your family." She feels that this is one reason why many immigrants take any job on arrival and don't think about the possibility of getting a better one. There also doesn't seem to be any awareness or assessment of skills based on their former work experience and training that could be applied to work here.

Many interviewees felt that the reason people come to Canada has a great impact on how well they integrate into the system. Whether people come here by choice or by chance influences whether and how they adapt. People who come here by choice can usually go home. Those who come here by chance have fewer choices, are often expected, by their sponsors, to become immediately self-sufficient and seem to try harder to integrate. As well, people who come by chance often arrive with many mixed feelings and emotional problems, not really wanting to live here but being forced to due to uncontrollable circumstances. Eventually, they accept their "fate" as one woman described it and try to build a new life.

Contribution of the cooperative inquiry methodology to the research process. There was a definite feeling that the same information could not have been accessed without the help of the research group--that a certain level of association is required to access certain kinds of information. There was evidence of this feeling by the number of women who refused to be interviewed. Many of these women were not well-known by the research group member nor me and did not trust us enough to share their experiences. On the other hand, there were many surprising incidents experienced by research group members with friends. One woman, a good friend of the research group member, had reservations about sharing her experiences when she realized the interview was to be taped and that I would listen to it. Another woman who had been externally interviewed asked that her information to be withdrawn. It seemed she also had suspicions about how the information was going to be used and who would be listening to the tape. With problems such as these occuring among women who were friends or colleagues, the research group doubted that I would have had better success working as a single researcher.

The research group felt that, because of my close relationship with each of them throughout this very significant part of their lives when they were struggling to regain their careers and get into the workplace, they shared much more with me than even their friends did with them in their interviews. It was felt that the information and stories were much richer because of the relationship we had prior to the study. A level of trust had been built up, we had spent a year of our lives together and the willingness to share was even greater. Also they wanted to help me by contributing to my study--the same as they would for family or very close friends.

There was also the feeling that many of the external interviewees only participated because they knew the research member, not because they really believed in the study or wanted to contribute to the research or even provide some information that could help other immigrant women. As a result, in these instances, the information wasn't as rich or as descriptive as that of many of the internal interviews. No solution was found to this problem and it is one that will likely surface in this type of methodology again. Since the interviews were conducted by more than one researcher, consistency of questioning and probing was not controllable and therefore was likely a contributing factor to the variation found among the interviews. In some studies, interviews that provide inadequate or incomplete information are rejected. Such was not the case in this study. Even though some interviews were more descriptive and detailed than others, they all had something to contribute.

Among the research group members, sharing of information was open and candid, but again they felt that happened because we all knew each other very well--the interviews were generally very rich in content and description and all-inclusive. Any opinions or suggestions about the process of the study were readily made. Another reason for this comfort level may have been that many of the women in the research group are working in jobs where they are constantly in contact with people (immigrants and Canadians) trying to cope with the difficulties of life and they realize the need for better systems to help these people survive. Also, all of these women have participated in some facets of the research process before (conducting surveys, gathering information through questionnaires and interviews and writing reports) and have some familiarity with it and how the sharing of information can contribute to change.

Suggestions for improving the cooperative inquiry methodology. It was felt by the research group that the requirements for the implementation of this methodology were far too time consuming. Modifications were made throughout the study to help accommodate the concerns and needs of the members of the group. The changes that were made to the model have been discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

It was also suggested that if the interviews (tapes) had each been used within the group as a case study, (which was the original intent) then each group member could have made a more significant contribution to the analysis. This was an excellent suggestion; however, the time required to fulfill this suggestion was again not manageable. Since the women in the research group were all working full-time and all have families, it was unrealistic to expect them to commit more time than they already had. Instead, the modifications were made as stated above.

Contribution of this type of research to society. There was a general feeling that research of this type can help people understand how to cope with leaving an entire lifestyle behind and starting again--that when they come here by chance, they aren't necessarily leaving everything behind that they had in their own countries (even though that may be the feeling actually experienced at the time). They may feel that way initially, but "they haven't lost themselves". "You may have left your country and your material possessions, but what you have inside your heart and head, you will always have (C)."

Only after doing this study, however, were some of the women able to analyze their own actions. It was suggested that professional women who come here must try to remember that they can learn, that whatever menial job they get when they arrive need not be permanent but is only a means to better things.

Also, that with the knowledge and experiences of the many people who have come to Canada by chance, agencies of initial contact can be better prepared to help immigrants understand that there are opportunities and there is hope to regain some of what has been left behind. Newcomers must have help to understand and accept that patience and perseverance are required to learn the language and pursue job opportunities that will eventually contribute to their professional and personal development.

Programs need to be implemented to address the needs of professional immigrants as soon as they arrive here, to provide assessment of certification and skills and then to offer courses to help bridge the gap. The work of the Alberta Association of Immigrant Professionals and the assessment office being established by Alberta Labour is a step in the right direction, but the government and the Association must ensure that this service is not just an immediate reaction to a lobby group with no long term effects--"a band-aid solution" as one member of the research group described it. The Association must ensure that this does not happen by continuing to be involved, by actively soliciting input in the form of expertise and funding from the governments, the community and our institutions of higher education.

My Reflections

Instilling my enthusiasm for the study into some of the research group members was sometimes a frustrating experience. I felt, at times, that I had spent two years working on the research proposal and all the group wanted to know was what it was that I wanted them to do, how many people did they have to interview, how long did the interviews have to be, how should the questions be asked, and when should the interviews be completed.

There also seemed to be a problem (understandably) with some, concerning the commitment of time to the study. I would have liked to have had much longer meetings to really share some of the data that had come out of the interviews. Some members, on the other hand, felt that they could only give two hours each time we met because they had all worked all day and had already spent other free time doing their interviews.

I would have liked the entire group to have listened to all of the interviews (or at least one interview) of each group member, but again the time factor came into play. They just could not commit the time required for this type of analysis. Instead, I interviewed (and taped) each of the group members individually about their findings, and then listened to each of their interviews to check their interpretations. This method was a much more efficient use of time for the other group members, but I felt it minimized the cooperative inquiry approach. I then gave each group member a written draft of the findings from all of the interviews (from my perspective), and requested feedback from them on an individual basis. Feedback was received on an individual basis either by telephone or individual meetings. Their feedback was incorporated into the final draft report

In summary, I feel the cooperative research inquiry approach is a research strategy which requires tailoring to fit the particular study. The efforts of the research group members were highly appreciated and without their contribution the process would have been overwhelming. This cooperative approach would be much more effective; however, in studies that could be facilitated through an established group in a work situation or an organizational environment. The requirement of research members to volunteer their time in addition to the demands of their regular lives is almost an unrealistic expectation and one that led to many of my frustrations throughout the data gathering process. All in all, it was a rewarding experience and one that has enriched my life and increased my level of awareness of the challenges facing professional immigrant women.

Conclusion

Through the collaborative, cooperative, reflective process, research group members became more conscious of their reality; they used the knowledge they gained from their reflections to formulate advice and recommendations to others embarking on similar adventures. Meaningful suggestions were also made to assist in accelerating and making less painful the process of acculturation for others. They are also all continuing in their pursuits to build more meaningful lives for themselves in this country and are working toward their professional goals. To test for "catalytic validity" (Lather, 1986) inquiry group members were asked if the research experience increased the level of conscientization of their own experiences and if they could acknowledge whether a transformation had taken place in their lives. The following paragraphs reflect their reaction to the process as a "catalyst".

Most of the women were acceptant of the need to improve their level of English, acquire more specific knowledge related to a desired occupation or work at an entry level or unrelated job until sufficient experience or finances have been acquired to challenge other areas. This is especially important for those participants in the study who may not have yet reached the level of personal and social acceptance, belonging, recognition and individuality that one realizes in complete acculturation. If these acculturation experiences act as the "catalyst" that will "spiral them upward to their goals" (Kim, 1988; Ruben & Kim, 1988) they will experience some feelings of success in the acculturation process.

Reflecting on their experiences of acculturation enabled many of the women to personalize their own process of acculturation. Those who felt that their acculturation was progressing positively were able to acquire a better understanding of how their actions and decisions directly affected their success. These same women were adamant about the advise they had for other professional women, while realizing that each professional immigrant woman comes here with her own problems, obligations and aspirations and that how one's experiences affect her acculturation is very individual.

Recommendations for Further Research

As with most research studies, the explanation of some issues uncovered numerous others that warrant studies of their own. Some suggestions are listed below:

1. A longitundinal study of a group of professional immigrant women, of various professions, to track their process of re-entering their profession.
2. A study to assess the effectiveness of the bureau being established by Alberta Labour for the assessment of professional credentials. Questions could include:

   a) What cooperation is being sought by and received from professional associations, educational institutions and working professionals?
   b) What steps, if any, have been taken by professional associations, educational institutions and working professionals to provide courses and relevant training to meet the shortfall or "bridge the gap"?

3. More effective and meaningful evaluation of current training programs, their objectives, appropriateness to participants' skills and interests and degree of success in leading to meaningful employment and/or to former professions.

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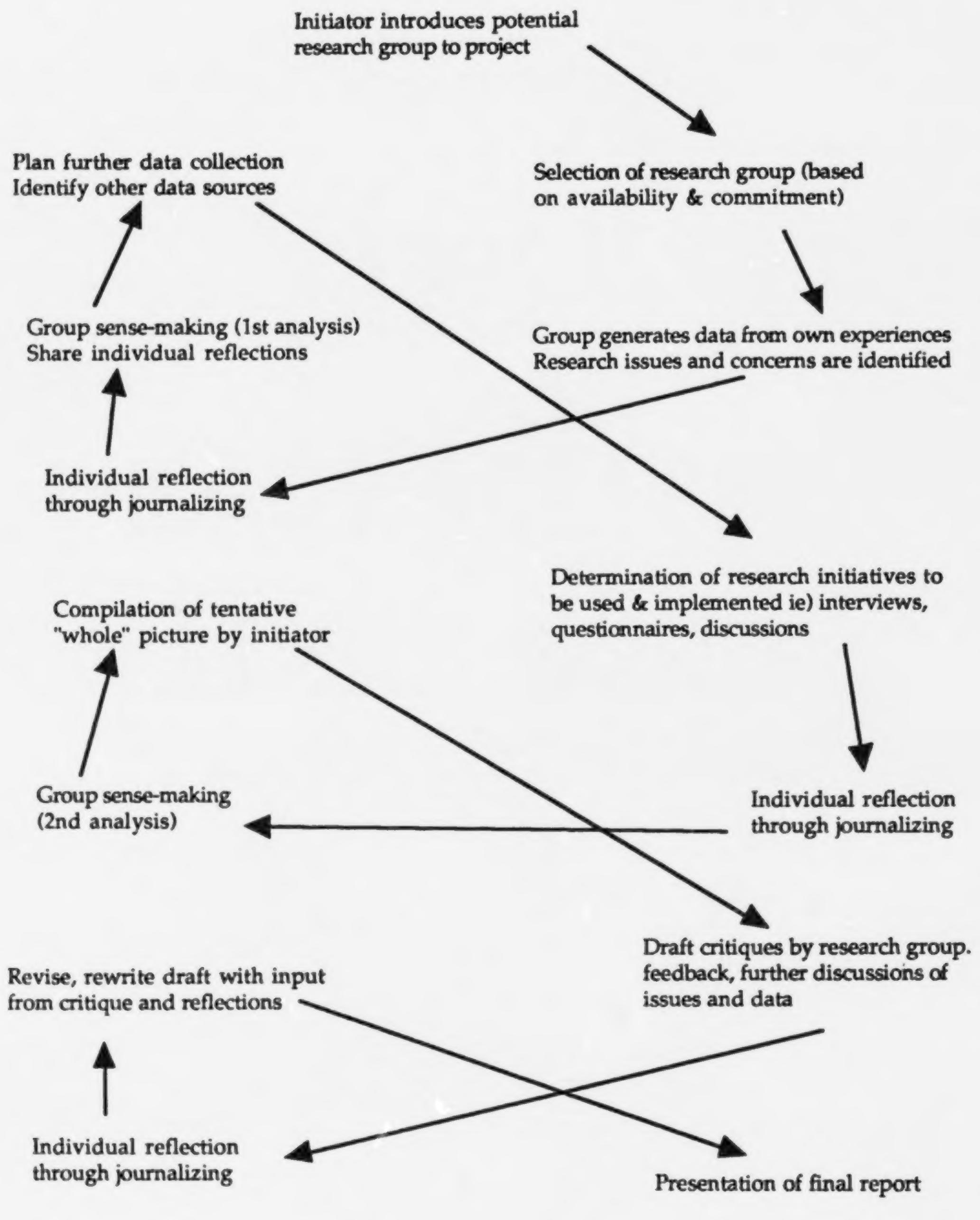
APPENDIX A - ADAPTATION OF COOPERATIVE INQUIRY MODEL

Adaptation of Cooperative Inquiry Model Developed by McLean & Marshall (Reason, 1988, p. 202)


Initiator introduces potential research group to project
Selection of research group (based on availability & commitment)
Group generates data from own experiences Research issues and concerns are identified
Individual reflection through journalizing
Group sense-making (1st analysis) Share individual reflections
Plan further data collection Identify other data sources
Determination of research initiatives to be used & implemented ie) interviews, questionnaires, discussions
Individual reflection through journalizing
Group sense-making (2nd analysis)
Compilation of tentative "whole" picture by initiator
Draft critiques by research group. feedback, further discussions of issues and data
Individual reflection through journalizing
Revise, rewrite draft with input from critique and reflections
Presentation of final report

APPENDIX B - INTERVIEW GUIDE & DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Why did you emigrate from your home country to Canada?

2. How did you expect your life to change on arriving in Canada and were your expectations met?

3. How did you learn the language? Do you feel you have learned the language sufficiently well to do what you want to do here?

4. What type of employment were you able to get on your arrival to Canada? What job are you doing now?

5. Describe any courses you have taken since coming to Canada. How have they affected your ability to integrate? How have they affected your life in general?

6. Describe your impression of yourself within the Canadian culture. Do you feel that you fit? Do you have many Canadian friends? Do you belong to many Canadian groups or organizations? Are most of your friends from your home country or are they Canadians? Do you feel able to maintain your own culture or do you feel forced to assimilate. Do you want to maintain your own culture?

7. Describe your efforts to pursue the same career or a related career as you had in your home country. What was required? What obstacles did you meet?

8. Are you happy here? Would you return to your home country if you could? Describe some experiences you've had in Canada that make you feel this way.

9. What are your long-term goals? Do you feel that you are making progress in achieving them? How long do you expect it to take?

10. What advice would you give others who plan to emigrate to Canada?

11. How has your family supported you?

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Country of origin______________________________

Age of arrival in Canada______________________________

Length of time in Canada______________________________

Type of work on arrival______________________________

Type of work at present______________________________

Education from country of origin______________________________

Profession or occupation in country of origin______________________________

How long did you take English courses?______________________________

____

____

APPENDIX C - CONSENT FORM & LETTER OF AGREEMENT

PARTICIPANT LETTER OF CONSENT (INTERVIEWEE)

I completely understand the intent of the research project and agree to provide information regarding my experiences of acculturation.

I agree/disagree (circle one) to the interview being taped and will be able to read a transcription of the interview and will be able to make any changes, corrections or withdrawal to the information at that time.

I understand the function and role of the research group and am aware that the interpretation and analysis of this information will be conducted by this group.

I am also aware that I will be able to read a draft of the completed report to ensure that any information that I have shared has been accurately interpreted and recorded.

I understand that my participation in this study in entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time, including any information that I may have already shared.

Also, I understand that my identity and any information shared will be kept completely confidential and that all tapes and notes of the interview will be collected and safeguarded by the initiator of the research study (Arlene Dunn). I understand that these records will be destroyed on completion of the project.

Signature of Participant (Interviewee)______________________

Date____________________________

LETTER OF AGREEMENT - RESEARCH GROUP

As a member of the cooperative inquiry research group I agree to comply with all the guidelines and precautions necessary to conduct ethical research.

In conducting interviews, I will ensure that the interviewee has signed the consent form and is completely aware of the intent of the project and the purpose for which the interview is being conducted.

I will also ensure the interviewee of her anonymity and identify her by interview number or pseudonym. Her name will not be included on any tapes or notes that I may use to record interview information.

I will endeavor to transcribe the interview with accuracy and will require that the interviewee read the transcription, making any corrections or withdrawals as she feels necessary.

I will also inform the interviewee that a draft of the interpretation and analysis (final report) will be provided for her to read and that she has the right to correct or withdraw any statements that she feels incorrectly portrays her experiences as she related them in the interview.

She will also be informed that all records of the interview will be held by the research initiator (Arlene Dunn), until completion of the study at which time they will be destroyed and no copies of tapes or notes will be made.

Signature of Research Group Member

____

Date ______________________________

APPENDIX D - INTERVIEW HANDOUT

THE INTERACTIVE INTERVIEW

Definition: " a guided conversaton whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis" (Lofland and Lofland, 1984, p. 12, cited in Kirby and McKenna, 1989, p. 66).

" a discussion or guided conversation in which both the interviewer and the person being interviewed share information and contribute to the research process" (Oakley, 1981, p. 48, cited in Kirby and McKenna, 1989, P. 66).

Objective: "to interact with those whose lives are being researched..." (Kirby and McKenna, 1989, p. 66).

Conceptual Baggage (Kirby and McKenna,1989, p. 49): the experiences and reflections of the researcher (s) that relate to the focus of the research.

a) includes both intellectual thinking and emotional feelings.
b) is most useful if an ongoing record is kept (journalizing)
c) can help to identify if any pre-established goals, assumptions or responsibilities may have unduly influenced the responses during the interview or analysis stages
d) allows you to distance yourself from your preconceived ideas and critically evaluate them
e) could include what you think you already know about the problem, gaps in what you know, quesitons you might want to ask, the certainties and uncertainties about the research
f) could include a self description or a description of you world view. For example, you might ask, "What is it in my experience that stimulates my interest in this research topic?" or "How does my experience contribute to or inform this research?"
g) provides the opportunity to gain new perspectives on previous ideas or feelings
h) are an important source from which interview questions can be derived

Acknowledging the existence of conceptual baggage allows the researcher to put the problem into context within her own experiences as well as to provide for another dimension to the data. In this way, the researcher becomes another subject within the research process (Kirby and Mckenna, 1989).

Essential Components of an Interactive Interview

1. Formation and clarity of questions

Questions form the basis of all interviews. Specific questions are formulated from:

a) the **"conceptual baggage"** explained above
b) what other ask you or tell you when you explain what you are researching
c) spontaneous questions that come to mind when you are doing other, often unrelated tasks
d) reading you might have done on the research question

Remember that all questions can be potentially useful.

2. The setting and the relationship between the interviewer and the participant

a) there must be a sense of equality between the two
b) combine a set format (interview guide) with interactive, spontaneous questions

3. Identification of the research topic, why it is being done and how it is being conducted

a) allow the participant to accept or reject the invitation to participate
b) have participant sign letter of consent

4. As well as an instrument of data collection, the interview is a sharing of ideas, philosophy, experiences--a sharing of self

The interview is a voluntary arrangement where either party may ask question, respond to questions, share or not share any particular experiences. If an optimal degree of sharing takes place, both parties may come to new personal and political insights in relation to the research topic.

5. Recognition of the investment made by all parties involved in the data gathering

Realize that, as a researcher, some follow-up contact may be necessary. In the case of this topic, there may be a need to provide individuals with futher information and/or contacts regarding a specific area or problem that was identified during the interview.

6. Account for yourself as you do the research

Sometimes a participants willingness to participate is influenced by the approach of the researcher. For example, you might be honest in admitting that some experiences and suggestions the participant might have could also be of use to you in making your own adjustments.

Checklist (before contacting participants) (Kirby and McKenna, 1989, p. 112).

Before Interview

1. Are the questions clear in my mind?
2. Do I have an interview guide ready?
3. How do I want to contact the participants: by telephone or in person?
4. How long will an interview take?
5. What kind of interview setting is most appropriate?
6. How much do I want to say in that first contact?
7. What kind of anonymity can I guarantee?
8. What times do I have available for interviews and for reflections afterwards?
9. Do I want participants to prepare in some way, to think about the topic beforehand or to bring some documentation?
10. What if they decline?
11. Others?

First Contact

1. Introduce yourself and research topic.
2. Time and place of interview.
3. Description of interview setting.
4. Description of proposed recording methods.
5. Length of time needed for the interview.
6. Particular note of any sensitive material.
7. Describe any preparation needed.
8. Arrangements for confirmation or alteration in plans.

APPENDIX E - DISCUSSION OUTLINE - REVIEW OF RESEARCH PROCESS

REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Issues for Reflection

1. How did you feel about being involved in a study that focused on such a personal and integral part of your life?

2. What were some of your experiences in accessing subjects for the interviews? Were women generally eager to participate, negative about participating or cooperative once you explained the study?

3. What did your involvement in this research project do for you as an immigrant woman who may have shared many of the same experiences and feelings as your interviewees?

4. How did you feel about re-living some of these experiences?

5. Did this process help you to re-examine or re-assess any of the steps you took in your integration into the Canadian culture as a professional immigrant woman? How? What would you do differently?

6. How do you feel cooperative inquiry contributes to the research process?

7. What suggestions do you have to improve the cooperative inquiry methodology?

8. What use do you think this type of research has and would you participate in the process again?